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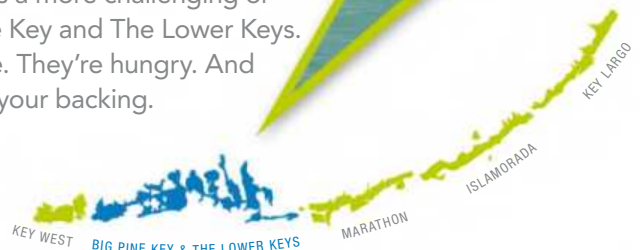
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WINTER FLATS: SHORT, COOL DAYS AND LARGE SWINGS IN
TIDE OFFER TROPHY TROUT OPPORTUNITY.

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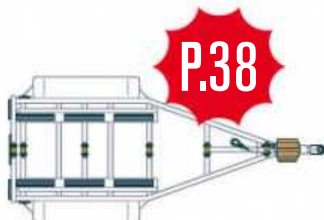


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FORE AND AFT



GLENN LAW

As we close out this issue on the brink of Halloween, the dates on the pages say it's the dead of winter. This is the issue that you'll carry through December and January, the darkest months of the year. So like one of those black-and-white movie scenes that show the pages falling off the calendar to indicate time passing, we'll peel a few off and channel the Roman god Janus, the one with two faces; one looking back and the other forward.

It's been a landmark year for the future of the fish we depend on. Battles remain but progress is evident. In particular, we've seen steps toward a healthier reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, which determines how our fisheries are managed and for whom.

If you follow our reporting, you know this past year saw a big change in the tide, when the first-ever National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy was published by the National Marine Fisheries Service. This document (issued largely in response to the Morris-Deal Report presented by a coalition of recreational fishing interests a year prior) validated



recreational fishing issues, priorities and considerations in an agency that has always functioned in service to commercial fishing. That's unprecedented validation.

Meanwhile, the MSA reauthorization winds its way through the lawmaking process, though slowly, and now that we've entered into what in Washington is referred to as the "silly season" — when politicians are politicking and wouldn't say sherbet if they had a mouthful — there is new fodder for hope that when the MSA is finally voted through both the House and Senate, it will include unprecedented considerations vital to anglers: the health of our fish stocks and our right to enjoy

DOUBLE TAKE: Lessons and gains from the past hold promise for the future.

them. The new national policy brings much-needed fresh air to the management process, and while the wind can be capricious, the National Policy puts it at our backs.

We also watched an encore performance of a mangled federal management system this past year, with Gulf red snapper playing the leading role in a cast of problems that need fixing.

Private anglers suffered a ridiculously short snapper season again, and federal management moved even deeper into privatizing the rights to those fish.

Into that catastrophe stepped the five Gulf states with H.R. 3094, the Gulf States Red Snapper Management Authority Act, which would transfer snapper management to those states' fish and wildlife agencies. In most cases, they've been far more competent at managing fisheries along both the Gulf and the Atlantic than the feds. While plenty of battles lie ahead, we gained some new tools to work with as we address them.

Meanwhile, cold fronts sweep in here where we have the insolence to complain when the temperature drops into the 60s. The best time of the year lies ahead. Sailfish pour down the reefs, and then it won't be long before the tarpon head our way.

The fresh calendar promises challenges, but we as anglers, if nothing else, remain perennially optimistic. It's what pushes us back onto the water again and again. It's our nature to carry lessons and skills gained over the year past and lean into a new year of opportunities. 🐟

Glenn Law
Editor-in-Chief

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SW KIDS
NEW GEAR
CONSERVATION

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ISSUE
JANUARY 2016
VOL. 77/ NO. 1



READER'S CATCH

MIGRANT: Wahoo in an unexpected neighborhood

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SW KIDS

POWER TEAM: Reds, stripers and snook

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CONSERVATION

LOCKOUT: Anglers lose in Biscayne National Park

p.22



NEWS LINES

RED GROUPER REOPENS IN THE GULF

The arrival of the new year means recreational anglers across the Gulf of Mexico can again take home red grouper as the three-month closure comes to an end.

Despite reducing the bag limit to two fish with the intent of extending the fishing season, NOAA Fisheries closed red grouper to recreational angling on

Oct. 8, claiming the 2015 landings data indicated the 1.9 million-pound recreational catch limit would be reached by Oct. 7.

Red grouper reopens on Jan. 1, but the latest closure, which followed the well-publicized nine-day 2015 red snapper season and a shortened recreational red grouper season in 2014 — when a larger bag limit was

allowed — casts further doubt in the feds' ability to manage recreational fisheries in a way that makes sense.

Momentum is building to shift management of federal fisheries to the states, which have proven far more capable of managing for the health of the resources and the greatest access of their citizens.







20
NEW GEAR

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NEWS LINES

FEDS RELEASE 2014 CATCH DATA

NOAA Fisheries recently published an extensive report with the latest data on recreational and commercial fishing in U.S. waters.

A state of the union of sorts, "Fisheries of the United States 2014" contains a wealth of

information pointing out, along with the progress of important marine species, various fishing trends and their impact at the regional and national levels. Here are some of the highlights:

In 2014, 10.4 million anglers made 68 million marine

recreational fishing trips in the U.S. The estimated total catch was 392 million fish. More than 60 percent of the fish were released.

Nearly 57 percent of recreational marine fishing trips took place along the Atlantic coast and produced over 55 percent of the total catch. The Gulf Coast was next, accounting for more than 32 percent of recreational

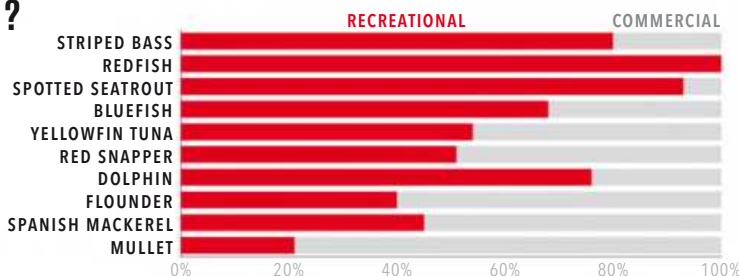
marine fishing trips and more than 39 percent of the catch. The Pacific coast accounted for 8 percent of fishing trips and nearly 4 percent of the catch.

Over the last 10 years, the total annual catch of striped bass, the species caught most in U.S. waters, decreased from nearly 21 million fish in 2005 to almost 9.2 million fish in 2014 when said catch total was more than 31 percent below the 10-year average of more than 13 million fish.

The total annual catch of spotted seatrout has varied between 5.7 and 8.8 million fish over the last 10 years, with an average of nearly 7.1 million fish caught per year. Of the nearly 5.9 million trout caught in 2014, over 84 percent were released.

SHARE ALIKE?

While focusing heavily on commercial catches, the NOAA report illustrated an interesting contrast between recreational and commercial shares of several species, many of them popular game fish.



LETTERS

ACTIVIST RESPONSE

I need to address Rip Cunningham's column [regarding reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act] in the October issue of *Salt Water Sportsman*.

Mr. Cunningham has taken the position that we in the recreational fishing community are supporting the wrong piece of legislation. He particularly takes issue with the reference to "flexibility" in H.R. 1335.

I recognize Mr. Cunningham has earned the right to voice his opinion. However, I'd like to convey something my friend Jeff Angers has said and continues to say to me, a relative newcomer to the political battle over recreational fishing: "This is a process, not an event." To wit: While H.R. 1335 may include elements that Mr. Cunningham doesn't like, it's highly unlikely the final MSA reauthorization will resemble the current House bill. From now until the president signs it, a great many voices will be heard and compromises made. While significant, H.R. 1335 is a point in the process, not the end of the process.

We've made tremendous strides toward a reauthorization that meets the needs of recreational stakeholders. Going forward, it is imperative that we in the recreational community work together. We are counting on your readers to advocate for legislation in the Senate.

Martin Peters,
Manager, Government Relations
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NEWS LINES

NEW BILL WOULD IMPROVE ANGLER ACCESS

The House Committee on Natural Resources passed a bill that benefits natural-resource

conservation and provides more access to recreational fishermen and hunters.

The Sportsmen's Heritage and Recreational Enhancement (SHARE) Act, introduced by Reps. Rob Wittman (R-Va.), Tim Walz (D-Minn.), Jeff Duncan (R-S.C.) and Gene Green (D-Texas), includes provisions to improve public

access to federal lands and guard against new regulations threatening to block or limit access to fishing and hunting. An amendment included by Rep. Amata Radewagen, (R-American Samoa), would stop the marine reserve in Biscayne National Park and similar unwarranted fishing closures.



UP THE ANTE: Prevalence of ethanol fuel is on the rise with new funding.

NEWS LINES

USDA GRANTS \$100 MILLION FOR WIDE-SPREAD E15

New government funding sets the stage for E15 (gasoline with 15-percent ethanol content) to quickly become more prevalent.

Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced a \$100 million Biofuel Infrastructure Partnership (BIP) that will provide funding to 21 states for 5,000 E15 pumps at 1,400 gasoline retail locations. That will more than double the number of gas stations offering E15 nationwide, a move opposed by the angling and boating communities concerned with potential damages to marine engines from the higher ethanol content in the fuel.

The American Sportfishing Association continues to work to repeal or reform the Renewable Fuel Standard so that mandates for increasing the use of ethanol are dialed back.

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WAHOO!

Tony Mazzola, far right, of Middletown, New Jersey, had quite the surprise when he realized he'd hooked this 100-pound wahoo off Manasquan Inlet, New Jersey, with Capt. Frank Dudis on *Contingensea*. Mazzola and his cousin, Chris Arroyo (third from left), fought the huge wahoo for nearly 20 minutes before they were able to bring it to the boat. With the help of Capt. Dudis, Mazzola gaffed the fish and lifted it over the gunwale. He also identified it for the rest of the crew as wahoo seldom range that far north.

YOUR CATCH To send in your catch photo, email us at catches@saltwatersportsman.com.

DROP US A LINE

Got a piece of good news to share? Want to gripe? Like to see your thoughts on the pages of *Salt Water Sportsman*? Send your letters, manuscripts and any relevant comments to editor@saltwatersportsman.com or via U.S. mail: SWS Editor, 460 N. Orlando Ave., Suite 200, Winter Park, FL 32789. Unsolicited manuscripts are welcomed but will not be acknowledged or returned unless accompanied by an SASE. We are not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts or photographs. **CUSTOMER SERVICE AND SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES:** saltwatersportsman.com/cs or 800-759-2127. Outside the United States: 800-979-6828; Back Issues: 800-464-2819; Bulk Reprints: 877-652-5295, ext. 117.



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SWS KIDS

LILLIAN EVANS, 11, SOUTH CAROLINA

Lillian, a new angler, is quickly catching on to the joys of fishing. She recently caught her first redfish, a 27-inch, single-handedly using a mud minnow under a popping cork. Lillian enjoys fishing in Bulls Bay in Charleston, South Carolina, where she has caught redfish, seatrout and flounder.

NOMINATE A KID

SWS recognizes kids who represent sportsmanship, passion and proficiency in saltwater fishing. To nominate an exceptional Salt Water Kid, email us at swkids@saltwatersportsman.com.



RYLEY MCCARDELL, 9, MARYLAND

Since age 6, Ryley has been fishing the East Coast from Chesapeake Bay to the Outer Banks, North Carolina. Striped bass is his favorite. His most recent one, which he released, measured 36 inches. As a Cub Scout, Ryley learned the values of conservation, and he's a member of the Maryland Saltwater Sportfishing Association.

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RYAN SHULEY, 13, FLORIDA

It doesn't matter to Ryan if he's fishing salt or fresh water; he just wants to catch some fish. Ryan started fishing at a young age with his dad, Craig, in South Florida. Whenever possible, he takes a break from playing baseball to grab a rod and hook a few trout or other saltwater fish with his dad. He has an appreciation for fishing regulations and the principles of conservation, and is very concerned about the future of fishermen like himself.

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03. BIG VUDU

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the park manages. BISC went through just such a process to revise its GMP a number of years ago. The prior update was in 1983, so no one argued that management did not need to look at all the changes in usage

CLOSED! Biscayne National Park's general management plan excludes anglers from prime fishing habitat.

that have taken place since then, and the changes that normally occur with natural resources. So far we are all singing from the same hymnbook.

When it comes to managing fish resources in BISC, the regulations, which have been based on common sense, said that the fishing laws of the State of Florida shall prevail in order for there to be uniform laws inside and outside the park. In 2002, this working arrangement was codified with a Memorandum of Understanding to "facilitate management, protection and scientific study of fish and aquatic resources within the national park." It further stated that "the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) believes that marine reserves are overly restrictive and that less restrictive fishery management tools should be implemented to achieve fishery management goals, and marine reserves would be used as a fishery management tool only when absolutely necessary."

So, earlier this summer BISC announced its selection of essentially the most restrictive alternative that would place 10,500 acres of prime fishing habitat into a marine reserve and out of reach for the angling public. This was after its own working group had suggested other restrictions and public input had supported most of

Access Is Key

BAD PUBLIC POLICY SACRIFICES VALUABLE RELATIONSHIPS.



BY RIP CUNNINGHAM

As this is being written, the fishing public is about to lose access to some of South Florida's key fishing territory. It just happens to be part of the Keys. This is a substantial step backward in the ongoing effort to give recreational users access to important fishing grounds.

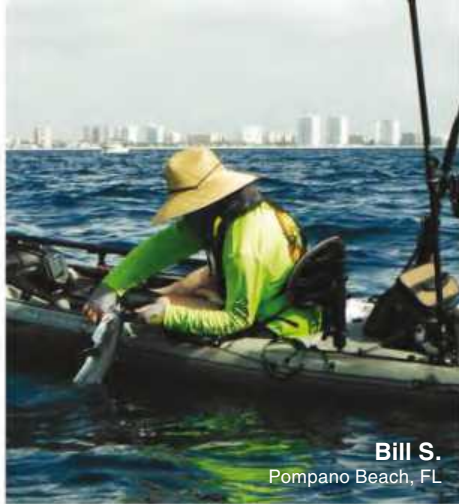
I wrote about this developing issue almost three years ago. At

that time, Biscayne Bay National Park (BISC) was in the final stages of updating its general management plan (GMP). Most readers will recognize Biscayne Bay as an important destination for those interested in shallow-water and reef game-fishing.

National parks periodically update their GMP, which essentially lays out how the park will operate and what its goals are for the public resources that



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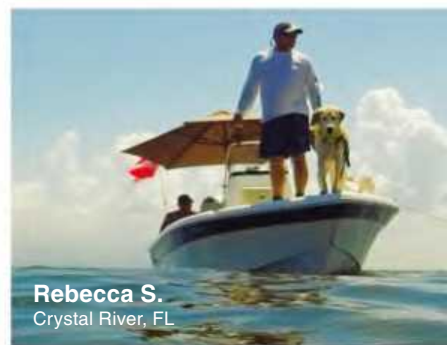
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those suggested alternatives. It would appear that BISC just went through the motions to make it look like it was listening to the public when, in fact, it had already made up its mind.

It should also be pointed out that while the FWC recognizes marine reserves as one of the tools that managers need to have in their toolbox to properly manage marine resources, the FWC felt that in this case there were other management tools that could be used to produce the desired results without a complete shutdown of such an extensive area. The folks at BISC, however, simply pointed out that they are only restricting about 6 percent of the total park area. OK, but a great deal of that 6 percent is a very productive fishing area and extremely important to the recreational user. Also, we have not seen any comparative analysis of how less-restrictive measures might perform in comparison to this restrictive alternative.

It would seem that BISC took the easiest way out by selecting the most

restrictive alternative. This is reminiscent of the struggle that went on for years with the Cape Hatteras National Seashore where the Seashore administration wanted protection of birds over all else. The fishing public wanted reasonable access while understanding the need for avian protection. The off-road vehicle users wanted no restrictions. The issue became so contentious that common sense was sacrificed. The BISC situation is fast approaching that level of acrimony.

Congressional legislation to deal with this issue has been filed by Reps. Curbelo, Ros-Lehtinen and Diaz-Balart to insert another level of input. It simply reads: "The Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Commerce shall not restrict recreational or commercial fishing access to any State or territorial marine waters or Great Lakes waters within the jurisdiction of the National Park Service or the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, respectively,

unless those restrictions are developed in coordination with, and approved by, the fish and wildlife management agency of the State or territory that has fisheries management authority over those waters."

This may be very appropriate for the BISC issue because the Park Service did sign a Memorandum of Understanding that essentially said the same thing. However, it could be problematic in other situations. Perhaps BISC should take a close look at how Everglades National Park officials worked with the recreational fishing and boating users during its GMP development process. That responsiveness to public input is how good public policy should be crafted.

I do know that when the very user group that highly values a resource is being completely restricted from accessing or using that resource, managers have lost a valuable ally and staunch supporter of sensible and sustainable management. That is poor public policy. 🐟



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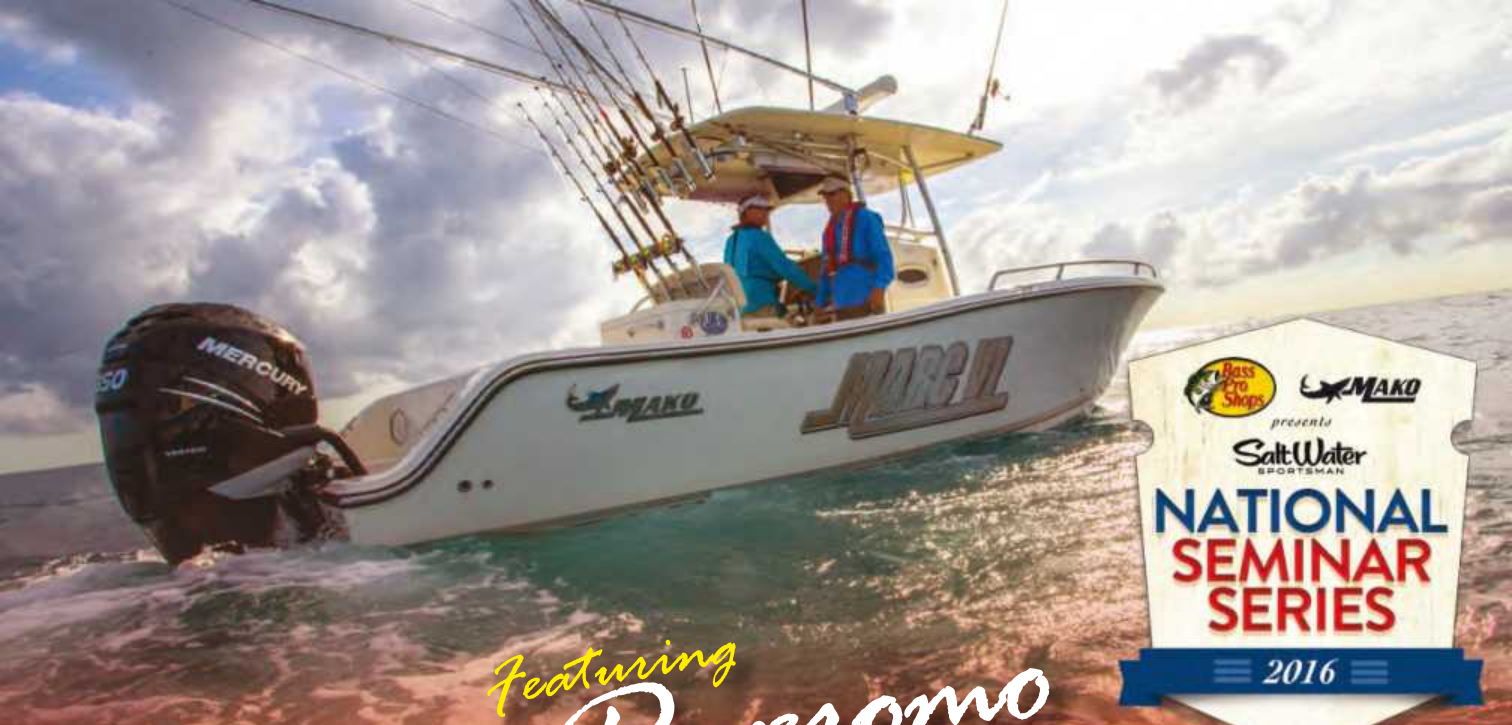
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TACTICS +
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SEATROUT



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NO-SLIP KNIFE,
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of crimping
chores on mono
and cable.

CRIMPING INSIGHTS

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF CRIMPED CONNECTIONS



FIT TO FIGHT: Proper
sleeve selection yields
reliable crimps.



BY GEORGE
POVEROMO

A professional crimping job decides whether you and the crew celebrate an incredible catch or partake in a long, depressing ride back to the dock — and we've all been on both sides of that coin. As basic as crimping seems, the "art" is anything but elementary. Selecting the correct sleeve and material, sizing it to the leader and properly executing the connection are crucial. To keep you and your next big fish from parting ways unexpectedly, heed the insights that follow.

SIZED TO PERFECTION

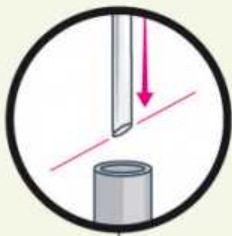
The objective of crimping, beyond forming loops and attaching hooks, is to compress a leader and meld it with the sleeve without damaging it. Read: zero slippage. Hence, it is critical to size the sleeve diameter to the leader.

Rick Mola, noted canyon angler and head of Fisherman's World in Norwalk, Connecticut, says it's impossible for sleeve manufacturers to offer a precise sleeve for mono or fluorocarbon leader in every specific pound-test due to their differing diameters. Therefore, sleeves are grouped into broader categories, such as 1.3-millimeter sleeves for 150- to 200-pound-test mono and 1.6-millimeter sleeves for 220- to 250-pound-test.

Mola recommends the smallest diameter sleeve through which the leader can pass, albeit tightly, versus a sleeve that is slightly larger and easier for the line to navigate. The latter has more slippage potential. When purchasing sleeves, Mola suggests bringing in your leader material (if not purchasing it at the same time), opening a pack of sleeves rated for that pound-test leader and actually fitting the leader into the sleeve. Sometimes a recommended sleeve size doesn't fit precisely. It's like trying on a pair of shoes before you buy.

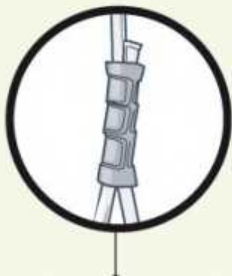
"Sometimes the diameter of your leader falls between two sleeve sizes," Mola says. "If your 200-pound mono has a diameter of 1.48 millimeters, a 1.3-millimeter sleeve will be too small for that line.

Proper crimping involves correctly matching the sleeve shape and style as well as the sleeve material, and the diameter and composition of the leader material.



FITTING TIPS:

Working a mono or fluoro leader through the correct-size sleeve can be challenging due to the tight fit. By cutting the leader at an angle to reduce its initial diameter and then moistening it with saliva, it should penetrate the sleeve easily. Prior to crimping, leave a short tag end. After crimping, heat the tag end with a lighter and blunt the end. In case of slippage, extra width in the tag end will jam against the sleeve.

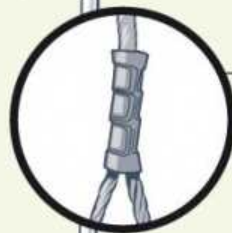


SLEEVES:

THICK AND THIN

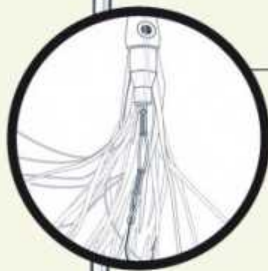
Long, thick-walled sleeves are intended for the heaviest tackle. When light-tackle trolling for white marlin, sailfish or dolphin, select short, thin-walled sleeves. They're unobtrusive and also help preserve the action of small baits and lures.

CRIMPING TIPS



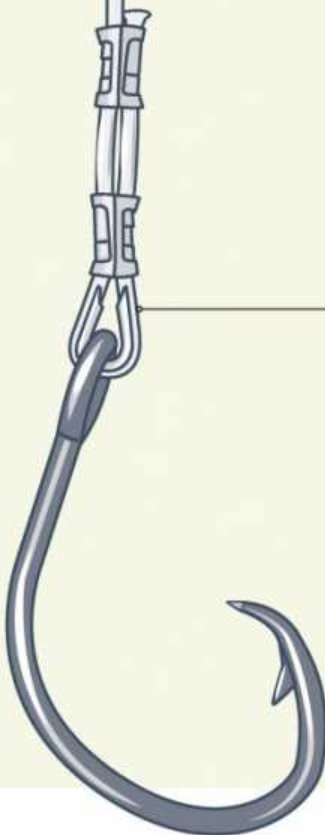
CABLE CONSIDERATIONS:

When crimping multistrand wire or cable leaders, opt for zinc-plated brass sleeves and always bury the tag end inside the sleeve.



DOUBLE-SLEEVING: DOUBLE DUTY

Double-sleeving is like an insurance policy, but is it worth the effort? If a crimp fails, that backup sleeve could very well save the day. Double-sleeving is also useful for putting space between a hook eye and a lure, like a trolling feather. When creating space this way, add a plastic bead between the lure head and the sleeve closest to the lure. This slight bit of extra space between the sleeve and lure prevents binding, plus it allows the hook to lay properly.



CHAFING GEAR: PLAY IT SAFE

Thimbles and plastic tubing, commonly used as buffers to prevent wear from the leader rubbing against the hook eye or the snap swivel, may just save you a large fish. Without anti-chafing gear, Mola says a hook may literally "melt" off the leader due to intense friction during the long, sustained run of powerful fish such as tuna.

You'll have to move up to the next size; in this example, a 1.6-millimeter sleeve. Then the proper crimping procedure becomes even more important."

TYPES OF SLEEVES

The best-selling saltwater sleeves are the oval, double-barrel designs. Round sleeves are less reliable on heavier leaders.

With a double-barrel sleeve, popular for mono-filament and fluorocarbon leaders, each leader strand rests snugly within its own chamber. The chance of the leader laying over itself is eliminated (ditto with related damage). Scarring of the leader during the crimping process is also greatly reduced, providing it's done correctly.

Double-barrel sleeves are also popular with cable rigs due to the exceptional bite the two metals generate. More on specific cable sleeves in a bit.

Oval sleeves are ideal for fluorocarbon leaders because fluorocarbon is more oval-shaped than round in diameter. Ovals often get the nod for heavier fluorocarbon as well as rounder nylon mono leaders used for big-game fishing (large marlin, swordfish, tunas and

sharks), but they also serve well for lighter leaders for small game.

One caution with oval sleeves: Make certain the

leader does not lay over itself prior to crimping.

MATERIAL THOUGHTS

According to Jack Butts from Rosco Terminal Tackle, there are only two metals used for crimps: aluminum and brass. "Nickel, zinc and black oxide are plated finishes applied to brass sleeves," Butts explains. "These two metals are favored over stainless steel because they are softer and less likely to damage the leader. Brass and aluminum will not react with the salt water and, therefore, won't pit or corrode."

Big-game angler Jeffrey Liederman of Capt. Harry's Fishing Supply opts for zinc-plated sleeves versus aluminum with cable leaders to prevent electrolysis from the two metals like a zinc anode does on an outboard. For mono and fluoro, both

THE HEAT IS ON: Extreme pressures during the end game put leader connections to the test.



Liederman and Mola are proponents of aluminum because it shapes best to those materials and provides the snugest fit.

CRIMPING GAMES

Oval and double-barrel crimping tools are designed with round dies for multiple sleeve sizes. Crimpers with a notch are designed for round sleeves. Mono up to 200-pound-test is easily crimped with a hand swage, whereas a bench swage is more precise for leaders

into the leader, weakening it. Based on the length of the sleeve, more than one compression can be applied for extra insurance.

On cable, crimping the bitter end of a sleeve prevents slippage. Liederman compresses the tag end and flares the end facing the hook.

THE TEST

Mola won't let any crimped system out of his store without a final test: a heavy-duty screw affixed to a desk. He simply attaches the connection to the screw and applies pressure. Any weakness reveals itself at this stage. Better here than when slugging it out with a heavyweight fish. After all, everyone enjoys a festive boat ride back in, especially when there's a big fish laying in the cockpit or a release flag flying from one of the outriggers. 🐟

MAXIMUM STRENGTH: Big-game tackle demands reliable connections in the terminal rig.

over 200 pounds. Avoid crimping near a sleeve edge. The end of a properly crimped sleeve flares, whereas crimping at the edge crushes the metal



1



2



3



A metal turnbuckle keeps the seat firmly in place.



1

NO-SLIP KNIFE

I use the self-adhesive nonslip tape typically used to wrap around tennis-racket grips to keep my fillet knife from sliding around in my hand. Winding the tape evenly around the knife handle allows a firm grip, even with slimy hands, so I can fillet fish without fear of the knife slipping and cutting me. And the tape is easily replaced when it gets too dirty.

Al Tarallo
Holbrook, New York

2

EMERGENCY CHUM LADLE

After I'd left my chum ladle at home, I created one in a pinch with a bucket handle, electrical tape and a plastic cup. I removed the wire handle from a plastic bucket and bent it at the halfway mark. Then I made two incisions in the top of the cup to poke the handle's ends through. I finished it off by applying electrical tape to secure everything in place.

Mark Lacz
Westerly, Rhode Island

3

REMOVABLE SEAT

Create additional seating on your boat with a few simple steps. I secure a shower seat to the deck of my boat with a turnbuckle and a few additional parts. I replace one end of the turnbuckle with a carriage bolt that fits the threads, and I drop the bolt through a hole drilled in the middle of the seat. The hook end of the turnbuckle is hooked through a camel strap screwed to the deck. The turnbuckle then secures the seat to hold it firmly in place.

Edward Palaszewski
Norfolk, Virginia

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STANDOUT OPTIONS

Conventional methods and traditional fly patterns don't always produce the best results.

For instance, when fishing for trout feeding among hordes of baitfish, if the typical baitfish patterns are not successful, switch

EAGER TAKER: Seatrout often save the day and also make a great primary target.

Specks Are Game

DON'T OVERLOOK THIS AGGRESSIVE AND ABUNDANT SPECIES.

BY MIKE CONNER

A species that is plentiful and eager to strike flies has to be included in a fly angler's list of favorites. Case in point, the spotted seatrout, better known as speckled trout throughout the Gulf Coast, is neither the largest fish nor the hardest of fighters, but it often saves the day when more glamorous game manages to evade us. And a day targeting trout specifically is both fun and exciting.

With winter upon us, falling water temperatures perk up the trout. In both Louisiana and Texas, shrimp runs turn on

the trout bite in a big way. Along the Atlantic seaboard, baitfish migrations send a plethora of prey — such as mullet and scaled sardines — into coastal bays, and hungry trout wait in ambush around oysters bars, dock pilings and grass flats.

You choose the scenario: flinging a Clouser Minnow into a channel to bang on schoolies, casting a popper or deer-hair bug at dawn over grass for topwater thrills with trout of all sizes, or wading quietly in shin-deep water for the big “gators.” Chances are trout will come out to play.

to a weighted shrimp pattern or try a dropper rig — a Clouser Minnow or shrimp pattern about a foot under a deer hair or foam popper. This rig also works well when the trout are “flashing” at the fly but not committing.

Going to a gaudy color that stands out is another effective option. Seaducers or Bendbacks in hot pink or chartreuse are great choices.

On the flip side, a subsurface shrimp pattern is not always the ticket during a major fall or winter shrimp run. Then, a topwater Gurgler is a good alternative. When that fails, switch to a Deceiver or a lead-eye Clouser Minnow. Or tie on a Woolhead Mullet in red-and-white or all black to give those shrimp eaters a real mouthful. As a bonus, that larger offering could be just the fly that produces the biggest speck of the trip.



CLOUSER MINNOW: Carry some with lead eyes for deep work and some with bead-chain eyes for shallower areas.



BENDBACK: This inverted tie is particularly well suited for slow stripping over sea grass and oyster bottoms.



SEADUCER: This suspending fly lands softly, and the action of its splayed feathers makes it ideal for short strike zones.



GURGLER: This unconventional foam popper imitates a fleeing shrimp, and the noise and splash it produces attract and excite fish.

Tackle and Lines

While 5- to 7-weight rods help make the most of fights with trout, remember it's the bulk and the weight of the flies that best dictate the proper rod and line size. If you are lobbing heavy or air-resistant flies, don't struggle with light rods. An 8-weight effectively handles most streamers and poppers.

Carrying a pair of rigged outfits, one with a floating line and another with an intermediate sinking line, lets you cover enough of the water column. I've had great success casting topwater and subsurface flies with clear floating lines, such as Cortland's PE+ Liquid Crystal. They're excellent for prospecting in clear water or bright, sunny days. But on days when the trout go deep, you'll fare better with a line that sinks at 3 to 5 inches per second.

AFTER HOURS



Night fishing for trout is excellent. Prospect lighted docks with blind casts. Don't assume trout are not present just because you don't see them. They normally swirl or sip prey in the lights, and they tend to position on the perimeter of a lighted cone of water. You often see the fish before casting, either feeding on shrimp or baitfish at the surface or holding in the current.

When the trout are feeding on tiny prey, use the smallest streamers practicable, such as No. 4 minnow or shrimp patterns. I carry two colors: white and brown. If bigger shrimp or baitfish are in the lights, size up your flies. A floating line is all you need. If you have to present a bit deeper, just go to a Clouser Minnow or other weighted fly pattern.

Fly Selection

Small seatrout mostly target shrimp, but they increasingly feed on finfish as they grow. So a good trout fly selection includes patterns that mimic both. Hook sizes run from No. 6 or No. 4 for flies that imitate tiny prey to

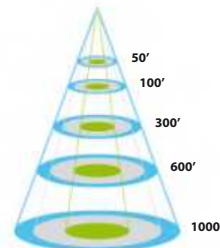
2/0 or 3/0 for big mullet patterns to tempt those big gator trout. A 10- to 12-pound fluorocarbon tippet on the end of a 7- to 10-foot tapered leader should suffice. But for sinking fly lines and flies, you can go as short as 4 to 5 feet. ☺



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Depth	Beam Diameter		
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100 ft	26 ft	44 ft	73 ft
300 ft	79 ft	130 ft	220 ft
600 ft	160 ft	270 ft	440 ft
1000 ft	260 ft	440 ft	730 ft



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BY CAPT. DAVE LEAR

Trailers are an afterthought for most anglers, simply a conveyance to get the boat to and from the water. But if you have ever been stranded alongside a busy highway with smoked bearings or a blown tire, gotten a ticket for not having lights or had difficulty loading the boat in a ripping current, a well-equipped trailer is certainly appreciated. There's no shortage of premium choices when buying new. If you prefer a cheaper option (and want to put the savings toward electronics or tackle instead), upgrading your current trailer is a sensible alternative. Here are some top improvements to consider.

"The price of LED lights has come down so much in the last five years there's no reason not to convert over from incandescent bulbs now," says George Long, store manager at Eastern Marine in Norwalk, Delaware, one of the largest trailer-parts distributors in the country. "LED, or light-emitting diodes, draw less amps, and the better kits are sealed so they're considered

waterproof," Long explains. "They also last longer — up to five years — and with as many as 18 diodes in some taillights, if one goes out there's still plenty of illumination." Complete conversion kits including the wiring bundle, taillights and side markers range from \$34 to \$54, Long says.

Loading and unloading become quick and scuff-free with the right bunks or rollers. Carpeted bunks can be modified in a couple of hours by adding polymer pads like the E-Z Slide kit or cut-to-size pieces for under \$50. Long says replacing the original rollers can get pricey, depending on the total number and design. Yates developed thermoplastic rollers that work well for retrofits. Another company, Stoltz, makes "the Cadillac of rollers," Long believes. Stoltz polyurethane rollers, bow stops and other replacement parts won't crack and are impervious to UV light. Spending more initially for premium materials is offset by the overall service life of the components.

Long says there hasn't been any significant advancement in

coupler design to warrant major upgrades other than self-locking mechanisms that eliminate the lever like those made by Tie Down Engineering. For owners trying to shoehorn small skiffs and flats boats into tight spaces, like the home garage, Eastern Marine also sells hinge and conversion kits to cut or modify the trailer tongue to shorten the overall length.

Senior anglers and those with bad backs benefit by splurging for an electric winch to replace the original hand crank. Electric winches run off the tow vehicle's 12-volt battery, and some utilize a double-line setup for greater pulling power. Long says Powerwinch and StrongArm by Dutton-Lainson are the dominant brands and range in price from \$270 up

**SPENDING MORE
INITIALLY FOR PREMIUM
MATERIALS IS OFFSET
BY THE OVERALL
SERVICE LIFE OF
THE COMPONENTS.**

to \$400 depending on the model and weight capacity.

Tony D'Ippolito, regional and international sales manager for Magic Tilt Trailers based in Clearwater, Florida, believes most people don't take proper care of trailers after they've been dunked in salt water.

PREMIUM ADDITIONS

"The majority of owners believe a trailer is just a necessary evil in the boating package," he says. "We know most don't service their boat trailers, so we add components that hold up in the saltwater environment like the Bearing Buddy and stainless-steel collars on the axle spindles. For older trailers, two of the biggest improvements you can make are upgrading brakes and tires."

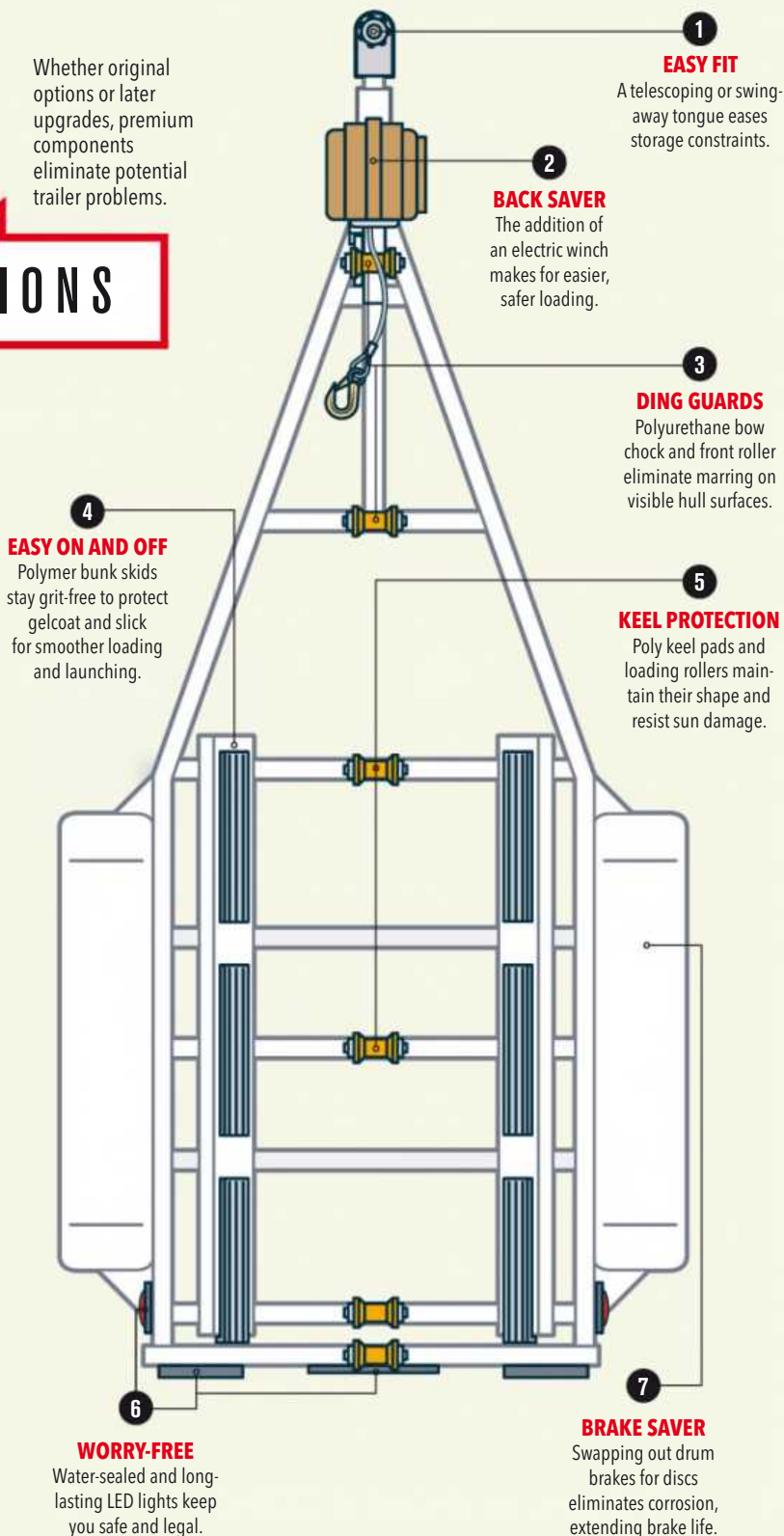
D'Ippolito says 80 percent of the boat trailers built are equipped with disc instead of drum brakes for good reason. Drums collect water and corrode. Open disc brakes are easier to rinse and drain. Kits for conversion start at around \$250 per axle.

Tires also instantly improve trailer performance. "If you still run bias-ply tires, radials are a good investment," D'Ippolito says. "Radials handle highway heat better than bias ply and hold their shape for a smoother, softer ride."

Aluminum wheels, though lighter than galvanized, are mainly cosmetic. So buyer beware. D'Ippolito says the anodized coating cracks when lug nuts are tightened, and the finish becomes cloudy after a couple of years.

Unless your boat stays in the water, a trailer is a necessity for many of us. But by adding a few key upgrades, it'll be ready to roll when you need it most. Like next Saturday. 🚗

Whether original options or later upgrades, premium components eliminate potential trailer problems.



FLOAT PLAN / FIRST LOOK

BOAT TALK :: **FIRST LOOK** :: ELECTRONICS :: YOUR BOAT

SEA PRO 239 CC

Sea Pro Boats, a renowned brand in the boating industry, returns to the market with the “Next Wave,” a new line comprising seven models. Following the success of its 208 Bay, the South Carolina builder presents the 239 CC, a deep-V center-console that comes ready to fish with standard features, like a fiberglass T-top, leaning post with four-rod rocket launcher, 35-gallon pressurized livewell, 94-quart cooler, large insulated fish box, bow seating with reclining backrests, folding transom bench, raw-water wash-down with pocket hose, freshwater washdown with pull-out shower, and easy-access lazarette for battery and seacocks, plus hydraulic steering, a Polk audio system and undergunwale LED lighting. seapromfg.com



LENGTH: 23'9" | **BEAM:** 8'10" | **DRAFT:** 17"
WEIGHT: 3,550 LB. | **FUEL:** 102 GAL. | **MAX HP:** 350
PRICE: \$67,200 W/ SINGLE YAMAHA F300

THE NEW PATHFINDERS.



AVENGER BAY AV-26

The new AV-26 is the first model in Avenger Bay's lineup since its relocation to Walterboro, South Carolina, under new ownership. At 26 feet with a beam of 8½ feet, it offers a draft of only 14 inches and an impressive list of features, including a leaning post with backrest rocket launcher, four flush-mount rod holders on the gunwales, dual undergunwale rod racks with bolster cushions, twin 27-gallon livewells in the rear plus a 12-gallon livewell forward, massive 260-quart fish box with pump out, 180-quart in-floor insulated compartment in the rear, 96-quart built-in cooler, washdown system, undergunwale lights, 65-quart Yeti cooler, Atlas hydraulic jack plate, SeaStar tilt steering and Lenco trim tabs. avengerbayboats.com



LENGTH: 25'10" | **BEAM:** 8'6" | **DRAFT:** 14"
WEIGHT: 3,100 LB. | **FUEL:** 89 GAL. | **MAX HP:** 400
PRICE: \$64,745 W/ SINGLE YAMAHA F250

OUT THERE IN A CLASS OF THEIR OWN.

PATHFINDER the boat that wrote the book on Bay Boats, has taken the idea to a whole other level. Faster, drier, shallower, roomier and more efficient ... the new Pathfinders will simply take your breath away.

Visit www.pathfinderboats.com to see the new Pathfinders today and find the dealer nearest you.

PATHFINDER
 ANGLER DRIVEN

A Maverick Boat Company brand.



GHOST UNLEASHED

Photographer Tim Rahn relied on a supplementary flash to capture this stunning image of a 9-pound bonefish as it was released just after sunset on the flats of Lower Matecumbe Key in Islamorada, Florida Keys.

PHOTO BY TIM RAHN





**FIND THE
HOT BITE
THIS MONTH**
IN THE TRAVELING
FISHERMAN PAGE 78

NEW ELECTRONICS ROUNDUP

THE LATEST IN NAVIGATION,
SONAR, MARINE SAFETY
AND ENTERTAINMENT
TECHNOLOGY

BY JIM HENDRICKS



Nowhere do products advance more quickly than in marine electronics. The pace accelerates each year with innovations emerging almost monthly in products that make it easier to find fish, navigate safely and keep the crew entertained. The excitement of new marine electronics never stops. Here's a preview of the latest technologies for 2016.



1

RAYMARINE CP570 PROFESSIONAL CHIRP SONAR

The CP570's advanced CHIRP transceiver sees through dense schools of baitfish, identifies thermoclines and simultaneously targets game fish. Rated for rough offshore conditions, the CP570 filters noise while producing high-resolution targets and reliable bottom tracking to 10,000 feet via dual CHIRP-sonar capabilities and 4 kW output power. Two independent sonar channels deliver faster target identification on compatible Raymarine LightHouse II MFDs. The TruZoom magnification mode reveals extra target detail without loss of resolution. \$1,999.99; raymarine.com

2

GARMIN GMR 25 KW RADAR SERIES

The new GMR 2524 xHD2 and GMR 2526 xHD2 high-def radars feature 25 kW of transmit power, open-array antennas and a range of 96 nautical miles. The 4-foot GMR 2524 xHD2 and 6-foot GMR 2526 xHD2 are available with Pulse Expansion to increase duration of the transmit pulse, boosting target size and range. Pulse Expansion is available for existing xHD2 open-array and xHD dome radars with a free software upgrade. They also feature Auto Bird Gain to locate flocks of birds. \$7,999.99 and \$8,999.99, respectively; garmin.com

3

SIMRAD SONICHUB2

SonicHub2 from Simrad upgrades the original SonicHub audio entertainment system, incorporating the newly implemented NMEA 2000 audio/entertainment protocol, which allows complete control from Simrad's NSS evo2 and NSO evo2 MFDs and glass-helm systems. Features include Bluetooth audio streaming to the SonicHub2, a video output (composite RCA) for playing files from a USB drive, dual USB ports for connecting and charging multiple devices, a 50W-by-4 amplifier and integrated support for Pandora internet radio via your favorite mobile device. \$329; simrad-yachting.com

1

HUMMINBIRD HELIX 12 SERIES

Humminbird debuts three new Helix series: the 9, 10 and 12 series, the latter of which includes four CHIRP models – SI (Side Imaging) GPS, DI (Down Imaging) GPS, sonar GPS and SI GPS KVD. The 12.1-inch color screen features 1,500-nit brightness along with 1,200-by-800 resolution. The built-in CHIRP ranges from 28 to 540 kHz. Each comes pre-loaded with AutoChart Live for custom-enhanced Navionics charts. The units are all networkable with Humminbird radar, autopilot, 360 Imaging and i-Pilot Link by Minn Kota. \$1,699.99 to \$2,299.99; humminbird.com

2

FURUNO DSR4DL UHD RADAR

With its 19-inch radome, the new DRS4DL UHD (Ultra High Definition) radar from Furuno appears identical to its predecessor, the DRS2D, but a new transceiver inside boasts twice the power. This 4 kW radar features a 5.2-degree horizontal beamwidth antenna and automatic, real-time digital signal processing. The DRS4DL is also priced \$500 lower than the DRS2D and requires no external power supply, saving another \$375. The new design incorporates a convenient cable to connect to both power and the NavNet TZtouch or TZtouch2 networks. \$1,800; furuno.com

3

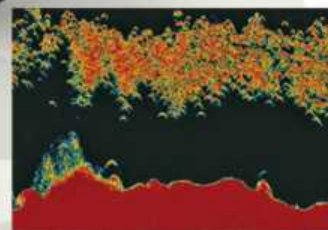
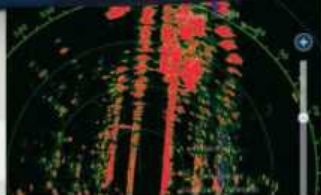
AIRMAR ULTRA WIDE-BEAM TRANSDUCERS

The Tournament Series ultra wide-beam CHIRP transducers from Airmar offer a fixed 40-degree beam angle on 40 to 60 kHz for even more coverage than Airmar's 25-degree wide-beam CHIRP. Available in through-hull and pocket/keel-mount models, the new transducers offer medium-frequency ranges of 80 to 130 kHz with 8- to 13-degree beam angles. The 2 kW models feature 15 ceramic elements and a water-temperature sensor with urethane housing. \$4,150; airmartechology.com



FURUNO

2



4

ACR AISLINK CB1

The compact Class B AISLink CB1 AIS transceiver module – one of the first automatic identification system products from ACR Electronics – networks easily with a wide range of navigational systems and multifunction displays, thanks to both NMEA 2000 and NMEA 0183 interfaces. The size of the AISLink CB1 allows for installation just about anywhere, such as behind the helm of small center-consoles, to share navigational data with nearby vessels – even those obstructed by radar – for greater safety. \$950 (excluding antennas); acrartex.com

3

4



1

SHAKESPEARE WEBWATCH ANTENNA

This lightweight dome-shaped WebWatch from Shakespeare serves as three antennas in one. First, it extends access to the Internet from a Wi-Fi hot spot, then connects to cell-phone networks with up to 4G speeds and receives local TV channels. Measuring 11.75 inches wide by 13 inches tall at 3.85 pounds, it features a 25-foot coaxial cable for 12-volt power and TV reception. Android and iOS apps and a web browser help manage the WebWatch. Installation includes pole- or surface-mount options. \$899.95; shakespeare-marine.com

2

OCEAN SIGNAL RESCUEME EPIRB1

The compact rescueME EPIRB1 from Ocean Signal is ideal for smaller center-consoles and bay boats. Thirty percent smaller than competitive EPIRBs, it features a 10-year battery life and measures 7 inches tall by 3.5 inches in diameter, weighing under 15 ounces. A retractable antenna helps keep the size small. Automatically activated when immersed, the EPIRB1 fits in a ditch bag or mounts in a manual-release bracket. Two high-intensity strobes maximize visibility in low-light conditions, such as at night or in fog. The EPIRB1 also carries a five-year warranty. \$452; oceansignal.com

3

KEP MARINE VIDEO SYSTEM

The new video-recording system from KEP Marine captures footage from multiple cameras to play back instantly on an iPhone, iPad or Android mobile device. The system allows users to email video via Wi-Fi. The easy-to-install KVNR-8001 networking video system also offers live view, great for onboard security as well as entertainment. You can connect up to eight cameras and add more through a power-over-ethernet hub. The system is compatible with thermal IP cameras, but it's optimized for pairing with KEP's new KHD-MCAM deck mount, HD IP mini bullet and KHD-MDOCK HD IP dock cams. Starting at \$3,932; kepmarine.com

1

Shakespeare
ANYWHERE[™]
WEBWATCH
WCT-1

2



3



-8001

USB

KEP MARINE
a spartan company

Rec

KEP
MARINE



4

4

STANDARD HORIZON HX380S HANDHELD VHF

The HX380S from Standard Horizon, a commercial-grade submersible handheld VHF, carries a 1,600 mAh lithium-ion battery that provides more than 13 hours of use on a charge. This 5-watt transceiver includes 40 programmable land mobile radio channels, DSC and CTCSS signaling, a 70 mW speaker, programmable scan, channel 16 priority scan, dual- and tri-watch, programmable channel names and NOAA weather channels with weather alert. A 110-volt AC and a 12-volt DC charger are standard. Optional speaker microphones and headsets are available. \$149.99; standardhorizon.com

5

FUSION SIGNATURE SERIES SPEAKERS

Fusion's Signature Series stereo speakers deliver outstanding audio performance under the harshest marine conditions, resisting vibration, shocks and corrosion to provide years of great listening aboard your boat. Aggressively styled in a choice of classic white, sports white or sports gray/chrome styles, these coaxial speakers are offered in a 6.5-inch, 230-watt or 7.7-inch, 280-watt configuration. Each features a silk-dome tweeter and large voice coil. A matching 10-inch, 450-watt subwoofer delivers premium bass tones. Starting at \$799.98 per pair of speakers; fusionentertainment.com




FAST FACTS FOR SUCCESS

TREAD LIGHTLY: Low tides and strong winds make navigating the shallows challenging. Take your time and stay in channels to avoid grounding.

SIGNS OF LIFE: Low water requires more time to get in and out of some areas. Look for signs of life before you commit to a spot.

SEEK SHELTER: The water is usually warmer in the lee side of islands and areas sheltered from the wind. Search such areas for moving water at least 2 feet deep.

 **WINTER RETREAT:** Extreme low water leaves few places for fish to congregate.



M E A N

D O N ' T L E T W I N T E R L O W T I D E S

L O W

K E E P Y O U F R O M S C O R I N G .

W A T E R

S T O R Y A N D P H O T O S B Y

A L E X S U E S C U N

My lure landed where the sand met the grass and took a couple of seconds to hit bottom. Twitching and settling every few cranks, the curly-tail jig kicked puffs of sand as I worked it back to the boat. The soft plastic was nearly across the pothole when a big seatrout shot out of the grass and pounced on it.

It was mid-January, and, aside from the chill, winter had brought the lowest tides of the year, a season-long occurrence throughout the Gulf Coast that forces inshore game fish to relocate and anglers to scramble to find them. The weak incoming tide that morning was no match for the stiff north wind holding the water back. But after trying two other spots unsuccessfully, we caught a couple of upper-slot redfish, that 4-pound trout and several other healthy ones working the outskirts of a grass flat that held 2 feet of water when the adjacent shallows were barely ankle-deep.

After playing that winter hide-and-seek game for many seasons, I've learned to look for inshore species in the nearest spots that satisfy their essential needs for food and shelter when their usual lairs are devoid of water. Here are the basics.

HIGH-PERCENTAGE LOW-WATER SPOTS

As water levels recede severely during the winter, baitfish and crustaceans funnel to deeper areas near their usual hangouts. Meanwhile, inshore game fish, like redfish, seatrout, flounder and snook, seek out the closest locations that satisfy their basic need for suitable temperatures, moving water and sufficient forage. Spots that offer the best combination of those three factors are most likely to produce, given the angler uses the appropriate lures and tactics for each specific situation.

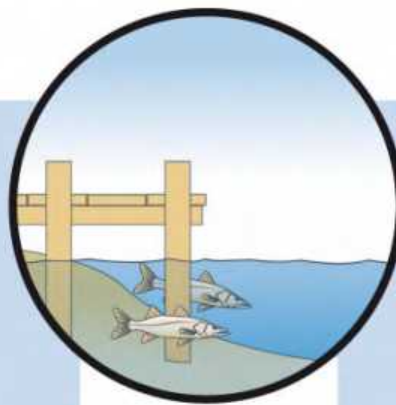
TIDE PREDICTIONS

Studying tide tables is a good start, but look beyond the times when highs and lows occur. Their heights are also important. In winter, during new- and full-moon periods, low tides are at their lowest and often fall below the average low waterline. Those are called negative tides and are depicted on tide tables with a minus sign (“-0.6 feet,” for example). But you must also account for the effect of the wind, which may push in or blow out a considerable amount of water.

TEMP-DEPTH RELATION

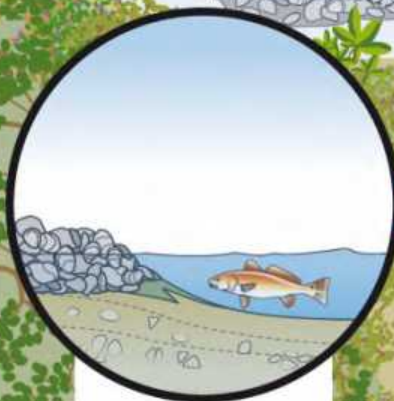
When a cold front moves in, the shallowest water chills faster. As water levels drop, fish and their forage move from shallow shorelines and marshes to deeper troughs and potholes before funneling into nearby creeks, bayous or channels to stay ahead of the receding water and falling temperatures.

On the backside of a front, when clear, sunny skies prevail, inshore species leave those deeper areas in favor of sandy potholes where they can soak up some rays, or muddy or dark, hard bottoms — like rocks and oyster



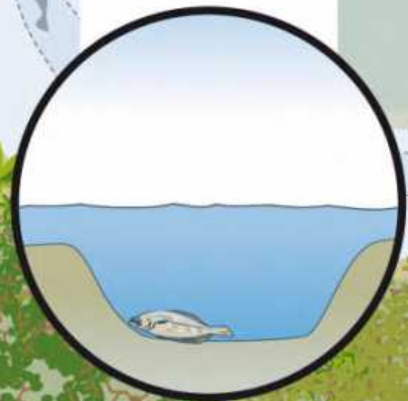
DOCKS AND PIERS:

Fish that seek food and shelter under docks or piers often move to the very end of the structures during low-water periods.



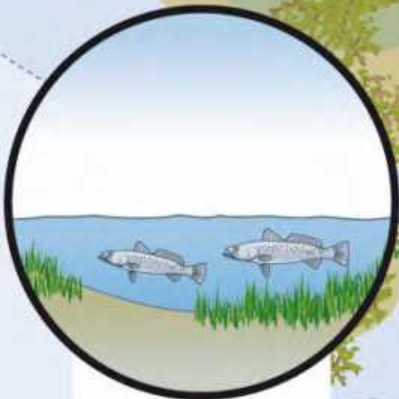
OYSTER BARS:

As the sun beats down on exposed oyster bars, the surrounding water warms quickly, attracting baitfish, crustaceans and game fish.

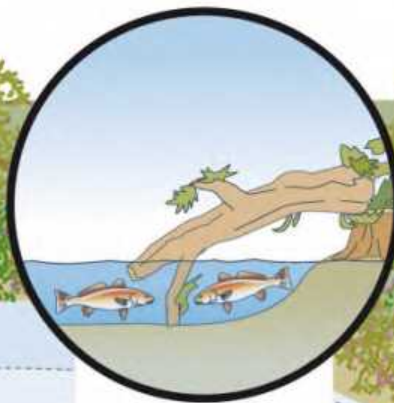


CHANNELS AND TROUGHS:

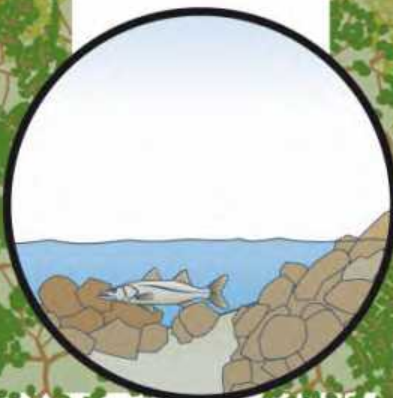
Once water gets too low to hang out in potholes and deeper shorelines, fish drop into troughs and channels.



POTHOLES: As the water in the shallows falls, nearby potholes are the first stop for fish forced to leave their normal lairs along shorelines and flats.



FALLEN TIMBER: When mangrove roots and fallen trees are out of the water, the few limbs and stumps that remain submerged still hold fish.



SCATTERED ROCKS: If rock jetties and riprap that hold fish are left high and dry, scattered rocks in a nearby creek or channel become a good option.

bars — which the sun warms quickly. But the water temperature must rise close to their comfort range before flounder, trout, redfish or snook make the move.

GAUGE TEMPERATURE

The sun and an incoming tide both raise the temperature of the water in the shallows. The sun does it faster, heating up the water and the bottom below it. However, in the morning and during cloudy periods, an incoming tide is likely to have a more immediate warming effect.

In the winter, a 2-degree change in water temperature makes a world of difference, especially when the temperature nears the lowest tolerance of your target species. A temperature gauge or a simple thermometer allows you to detect those small temperature changes and decide between similar fishing spots, quickly narrowing your search.

AVAILABLE FORAGE

Most baitfish and crustaceans retreat when the water and the temperature drop, gathering in the deeper part of a bay, the main channel of a creek or bayou, or in a nearby canal. So that's where you'll find the game fish that prey on them.

Wading birds often mean shrimp or small minnows



are present. They're also evidence that the water is too low to be productive. You don't find many fish until the water rises enough for mullet and schooling baitfish to move in, which in winter could take an additional foot of water or more.

MIND THE WIND

As mentioned earlier, wind can stack up or blow out the

water, turning certain places productive at low tide and rendering others unfishable when the tide table points otherwise. And in winter, a stiff breeze also brings down the water temperature. So when the sun is out, fish transition out of deeper water and return to the shallows considerably sooner in the lee side of islands and in sheltered coves and ponds.

THE APPROACH

A stealthy approach and long casts represent a real advantage in most shallow-water situations, but they're even more critical when extremely low water levels force the fish to stage away from their comfortable settings. Pole or use your trolling motor at low speed as you look for likely spots. If you have neither, use a

WINTER MENU



**1/4-OUNCE FIN-TECH
TITLE SHOT JIG
WITH CURLY TAIL**



**3 1/2-INCH Bomber
BADONK-A-DONK SS
(SLOW SINKING)**



**1/8-OUNCE FLATS
INTRUDER GOLD
WEEDLESS SPOON**



**CULTIVA MIRA VIBE
60 (WITH LARGER
REAR TREBLE)**



**POWERBAIT JERK
SHAD ON OWNER
TWISTLOCK HOOK**



the spot thoroughly before moving on.

TROUGHS AND POTHOLES

The first move fish make when the water level drops is to a nearby trough. These narrow runways — a foot or more deeper than the nearest shore — lie along oyster bars, islands and marsh shorelines on the

WINTERING BULLS: Large adult reds gather in sheltered coves and shorelines with immediate deep-water access.

OYSTER BARS: When they are high and dry, fish hang out in adjacent troughs, top right.

SUNNING GATORS: The big seatrout often lurk in potholes and troughs, right center.

LAY DOWNS AND STUMPS: Partially submerged trees still attract fish, bottom right.

drift sock or fashion one out of a 5-gallon bucket to slow your drift and control its direction as you cover an area. Power-Pole down or stake-out every time you see a potential fish hangout and fan cast until you've covered

side battered by waves or a strong current. In open flats, potholes, sand or mud holes devoid of vegetation and slightly deeper than their surroundings, are the first stops in many inshore species' exodus.

In either case, cast along the edges first. If that doesn't produce, work your lure right through

the middle. A 3- to 4-inch curly tail or paddle tail on a 1/8- or 1/4-ounce weedless jig head, like Fin-tech's Title Shot, bounced slowly across the bottom is an excellent choice, followed by a 3-inch LiveTarget Rigged Shrimp or similar imitation, a 4- to 5-inch soft-plastic jerkbait, like Berkley's PowerBait Saltwater Jerk Shad, and a 1/8-ounce weedless spoon.

OYSTERS, ROCKS AND STUMPS

While many oyster bars, jetties, mangrove roots and fallen trees are high and dry or only partially submerged during winter's low tides, they still warm up the surrounding water after baking in the sun for a couple of hours, so fish often hold in adjacent troughs and over submerged oyster clumps, rocks and stumps nearby.

A curly tail or paddle tail on a 1/8- or 1/4-ounce jig head also works well here, and so does a soft-plastic jerkbait. And a small rattling crankbait often sparks things up with a few reaction strikes. I prefer a Cultiva Mira Vibe 60, but I remove the belly hook and swap the one on the tail for a treble two sizes larger. The changes allow me to crawl the lure along the bottom with minimal fouling and yield more solid hookups.

DEEP BOWLS AND LEDGES

Some bays have large holes or ledges where the depth suddenly drops a couple of feet or more. Bait gathers in these deeper areas, and game fish — sometimes entire schools of redfish or trout — lie on the bottom or suspend in the milder lower part of the water column.

Slow-sinking and suspending twitchbaits, like Bomber's Badonk-A-Donk SS and MirrOlure's MirrO-dine and MirrOminnow, are ideal for this task.



CHANNELS AND BAYOUS

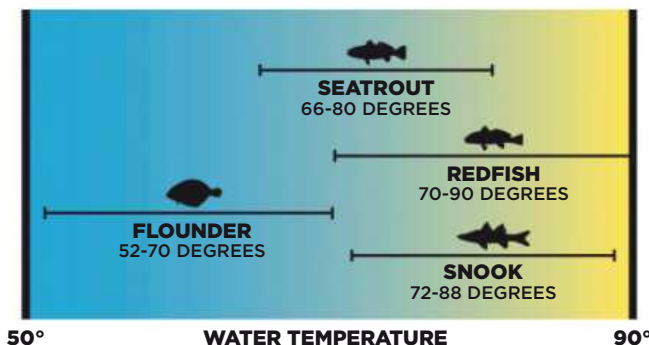
In most bays and marshes, channels and bayous generally contain the deepest water; therefore, the majority of fish end up there when the surrounding flats and finger creeks dry up. They're often narrow and have some current, so drifting is out of the question and poling can be difficult if they are more than 4 or 5 feet deep.

Slow motoring with an electric troller is best. Cast a weighted 3- to 4-inch swim-bait or a curly tail on a 1/4- to 3/8-ounce jig head along both edges before working the middle of the channel.

Remember this formula: right temperature plus moving water plus forage equals fish. Then dress in layers and look for spots that combine those factors to catch your winter favorites. 🐟

COMFORT RANGE

Just 2 degrees make a big difference when temps approach a fish's lowest tolerance.





2016 SWS NATIONAL SEMINAR SERIES TOUR KICKS OFF

CONDUCTED BY GEORGE POVEROMO,
HOST OF *GEORGE POVEROMO'S
WORLD OF SALTWATER FISHING*
ON NBC SPORTS, AND A LINEUP OF
NATIONAL AND REGIONAL FISHING
EXPERTS, THE NATIONAL SEMINAR
SERIES, PRESENTED BY BASS PRO
SHOPS AND MAKO, ENTERS ITS
29TH YEAR, MAKING THE FIRST
OF EIGHT STOPS ON JAN. 9 IN
HAMPTON, VIRGINIA.

WEALTH OF KNOWLEDGE

Held on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., the Seminar Series, the nation's most popular and longest-running course on saltwater angling, covers the how-to's and where-to's of catching the most popular game fish — inshore, nearshore and offshore — within each tour region. This information is spoon fed by teams, comprising SWS editors, fishing authorities, and local guides and pros. A minimum of 10 faculty members will be present at each location.

THE CONCEPT

The Seminar Series utilizes a team-teaching concept, wherein four faculty members take the stage for each session. Each team member is an authority on the respective topic. This ensures not only an entertaining and lively exchange of information, but also discussions on various approaches to



catch the respective species. Faculty teams are well versed in fishing with artificials, live bait and dead bait in different locations along a specific Seminar Series region.

Twin 10-by-10-foot screens help faculty reinforce through visuals key points of rigs, techniques and the species. Video “bytes” and on-stage demonstrations further support the learning process.

THE DOOR PRIZES

Thousands of dollars worth of door prizes are up for



JAN. 16
BRIDGEPORT,
CONNECTICUT

FEB. 20
ATLANTIC CITY,
NEW JERSEY

JAN. 9
HAMPTON,
VIRGINIA

FEB. 6
SAVANNAH,
GEORGIA

FEB. 27
PORT ST. LUCIE,
FLORIDA

JAN. 23
TAMPA,
FLORIDA

JAN. 30
ISLAMORADA,
FLORIDA KEYS

grabs at each location, including Penn reels, sunglasses, lures, coolers, kites, dredges, teasers, Bass Pro Shops gift certificates, Nu-Ice packs and more. The grand prize at each location is a fishing trip to the Florida Keys. And the super grand prize — a Mako Pro Skiff 17 CC — will be awarded two weeks after the conclusion of the eighth and final seminar on the tour via a drawing comprising the names of all those who attended a 2016 Seminar Series event.

THE AFTER PARTIES

Seminar participants have the opportunity to attend the After Seminar parties and socialize with George Poveromo. The evening after each seminar (from 5 to 8 p.m.), Bass Pro Shops will host an After Seminar party, especially designating a section of the store for seminar attendees, with food, drinks and live music. Each attendee may bring a guest and must have a Seminar Series badge to attend.

With Biloxi as the only exception (there's not a Bass Pro Shops nearby yet), all 2016 seminar locations will have an After Seminar party.

THE SPONSORS

At the seminar halls, Bass Pro Shops, Penn, Rapala, Sufix, Williamson, VMC, Simrad, Columbia Sportswear, Mako, Costa, Mercury, Star Tron and the Florida Keys & Key West will display products and services, with representatives on hand to answer questions.

UNBELIEVABLE DEAL

In addition to five hours of in-depth angling instruction, door prizes and After Seminar parties, each ticket holder receives a subscription or subscription extension to *Salt Water Sportsman*, as well as a course textbook, a Roffer's Ocean Fishing Forecast analysis, a \$10 Bass Pro Shops discount card (on a purchase of \$75 or more), OrPine Wash & Wax, Corrosion Block, Star Tron fuel additive and Star brite Boat Guard.

ADVANCE-REGISTRATION PERKS

In addition to guaranteeing their seats at a seminar, those who register in advance will have their names entered into a special drawing for a chance to win one of eight Penn Clash reels. One reel will be awarded prior to each of the eight 2016 seminar tour stops.



VIP TICKET UPGRADES

Along with a chance at winning a Penn Clash reel, register in advance for a chance to win a VIP ticket upgrade, which entitles the winners to access backstage, where they can hang out with the Seminar Series faculty and have lunch on the house. A total of six VIP ticket upgrades will be awarded for each of the eight stops on the 2016 tour.

HOW TO REGISTER

Tickets are \$55 each and can be ordered with a major credit card either online at nationalseminarseries.com or by calling 1-800-448-7360.

Don't delay or you just might not get a seat! 🎟️



GRAND PRIZE: All attendees during the eight 2016 tour stops in six states will have their names entered in a drawing to win a Mako Pro 17 Skiff CC.



FAST FACTS FOR SUCCESS

PROGRESS: Start fishing over rocks and wrecks 40 to 50 miles out in November. Look deeper as the season progresses.

KINSHIP: Sea bass congregate by size class, so prospect until you find locations holding the larger specimens.

VERSATILITY: Prospect with jigs, then shift to bait cautiously to avoid drawing dogfish. If they show up, move on.

 **PRIME FARE:** Artificials pull big bass off small wrecks.





WORLD-CLASS SEA BASS

STORY AND PHOTOS BY NICK HONACHEFSKY

OFFSHORE ROCK PILES AND
WRECKS OFF NEW JERSEY HOLD
JUMBO BLACK SEA BASS.



**SEAN REILLY STOOD IN
CAPT. AL CRUDELE'S *BAYHOUND*
WOEFULLY HOLDING ON TO HIS
7-FOOT ROD AND WATCHING
50-POUND BRAID EVAPORATE
FROM HIS REEL AS A 300-POUND
MAKO SHARK SOMERSAULTED AND
SPRAYED US WITH WATER ON EVERY
RE-ENTRY. BUT THIS ISN'T ABOUT A
MAKO SHARK, IT'S ABOUT WHAT
THE MAKO SHARK ATE.**

For three hours straight without a minute's break, our crew of five reeled in humpback black sea bass two to three at a time, which no doubt attracted to the area every bluefish, bluefin tuna and mako shark — one of which had eaten Reilly's catch. The sea-bassing was hot. When the winter sea bass bite is on, it's nonstop action 50 to 80 miles off New Jersey's coast, where humpbacks stack so thick that a crew of five can load a coffin box with 3- to 7-pounders in a few hours' time.



PICK YOUR SPOT

Come wintertime, black sea bass migrate off the coast and in a southerly direction, staging on the 50- to 80-mile wrecks and rock piles, seeking water temperatures between 54 and 63 degrees. Crudele chooses his sea bass spots wisely. "In November we'll start on rocks in the 40- to 50-mile range, but by December we hit the glacial rock piles inside Baltimore canyon," he explains.

Capt. Denis Katliarov of *Russian Roulette*, a major sea bass hound, states, "Ninety-nine percent of the time, I fish

wrecks, our primary structure up in north Jersey. We'll search out low-profile wrecks, which hold more big fish close to the bottom. Ideally, anything that comes up about 10 feet is

the relief we look for."

You don't want to waste gas looking around, so pick the right spot by checking water-temp charts and distances beforehand. Katliarov says, "High structures tend to hold smaller fish, while low-profile wrecks attract larger sea bass. If a wreck's giving up all small sea bass, we'll move pretty quickly to find another one." Crudele adds, "We'll run past a spot and drift over it, prospecting with jigs first to see who's home. If we see some nice fish come up, we'll switch over to bait so as not to bring in the dogfish, which take over and cut every sea bass in half on the way up."

TIME IT RIGHT

Timing is one facet to success; another is choosing to either anchor or drift. Katliarov prefers to anchor. "We can see if people are catching small fish or large ones, then we'll make a move or stick it out based on that, as sea bass

tend to school with same-size fish." Crudele, however, likes to work a spot by drifting it a few times to determine the size of the fish, then anchor up. "If I know we are on a big fish spot, I'll set the anchor. We'll work that spot hard, then bridle the anchor and shift around to find the honey holes."

On our trip, minimal winds and little current let us slowly drift over a spot Crudele marked on the plotter. Once the wind blew too strong to drift effectively, he anchored up. We soon began to load the cooler with quality sea bass, but after a half-hour, we started

PARTY TIME: Sea bass gather in like-size aggregations over wrecks.

CATCH SHARE: Left, mako sharks and dogfish also find sea bass fine table fare.





SWS TACKLE BOX:

NORTHEAST BLACK SEA BASS

RODS: 7-foot Lamiglas 7040 CT conventional or equivalent medium- to fast-action rod rated for 20- to 50-pound line

REELS: Shimano Torium 20 or equivalent conventional high-speed reel

LINE: 50- to 65-pound braid

RIGS: 6- to 12-ounce Crippled Herring jigs, hammered diamond jigs, size 3/0 to 4/0 Gamakatsu Octopus hooks, 3- to 5-inch red curly-tail grubs, Berkley Gulp! Shrimp in New Penny and 4-inch Gulp! Swimming Mullet, red beads and 6- to 14-ounce bank sinkers

HIGH-LOW RIG

Simple bottom rigs include various combinations of jigs or weights, and natural bait and artificials on droppers tied on 40- to 50-pound fluorocarbon leaders with a 150- to 200-pound swivel at the top.

8- TO 12-OUNCE
HAMMERED DIAMOND JIG
OR CRIPPLED HERRING

36 INCHES
BETWEEN JIG
AND DROPPER

4 FEET OF
40-POUND
FLUOROCARBON

4/0 HOOK
ON A 5-INCH
DROPPER

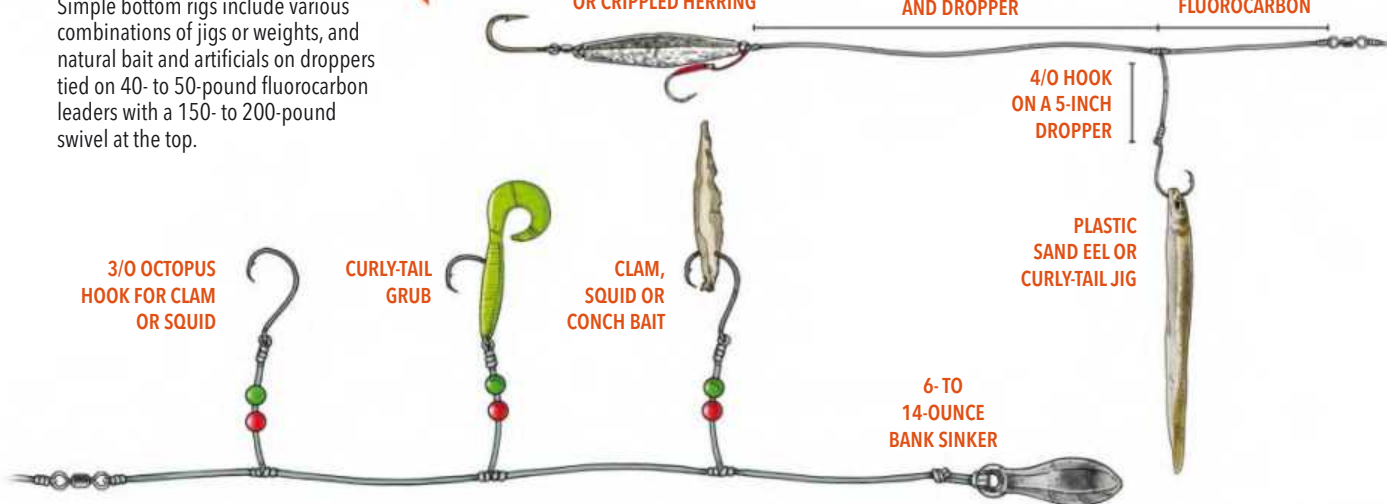
PLASTIC
SAND EEL OR
CURLY-TAIL JIG

3/0 OCTOPUS
HOOK FOR CLAM
OR SQUID

CURLY-TAIL
GRUB

CLAM,
SQUID OR
CONCH BAIT

6- TO
14-OUNCE
BANK SINKER





MATCH THE CATCH: Sea bass enjoy a varied diet of crustaceans as well as baitfish.

seeing smaller fish. Crudele knew it was time to move, but not far. He bridled the anchor line and, paying out a little at a time, shifted us 30 to 40 feet, and we were into monster sea bass of 4 to 7 pounds. “Many times people leave a wreck thinking they picked apart a spot, but all you have to do is find another part of the rock pile where they haven’t seen your baits yet,” he explains.

BAITING UP

“Fresh clam out-fishes anything,” says Katliarov. However, sea bass are opportunistic feeders, and as we landed fish I noted the forage they were spitting up: white legger crabs, baby squid, baby sea scallops, sand eels, anemones, sea mice and shrimp. Crudele carries fresh clams, but when he can obtain white legger crabs or fresh conch, sea bass go bonkers for it. “When fishing those conch and crab baits, it’s doubleheaders and tripleheaders,” he says. When baiting up, a 3-dropper-loop, high-low rig with 3/0 Gamakatsu Octopus hooks and adorned with red, orange or lime-green beads absolutely hammers sea bass. One of the most important tricks I learned from Crudele is to lance a bait only once

through the tip, so it undulates in the current. Baits hooked multiple times spin and turn off the larger, wiser fish.

GET JIGGY

“We find the largest sea bass always seem to hit the jigs,” Katliarov says. “Drop the jig to the bottom and simply reel up slowly about 10 feet, then drop back down, bouncing it slightly off the bottom. Guys that swoop and sweep the jig won’t catch as many.”

A simple jigging rig consists of a 50-inch section of 40-pound Seaguar fluorocarbon leader and an 8- to 12-ounce hammered diamond jig or Crippled Herring jig on the end with a teaser tied roughly 36 inches up. Teasers can be 4/0 Baitholder hooks lanced with 5- to 6-inch curly-tail grubs or plastic sand eels in silver or greenish natural colorings. Crudele likes to use bright colors like cucumber, purple, fluorescent green or his favorite, black-and-blue. “Make quick bounces off the bottom, leave the jig on the seafloor and bounce it slowly,

and shake the line so the teasers dance a bit to incite the strike. Don’t make long, swooping motions,” notes Crudele. Sea bass like their presentations frantic but contained, not long and fluttery.

END GAME

Whether baiting or jigging, when you feel you’ve got a Sea Bass on the line, the key to success is to reel steady and slow, so the fish’s head shakes don’t dislodge the hook. Always think slow and steady. However, getting back to that mako shark. If you do feel on the way up that something stops your progress, be prepared for anything.

The 300-pound mako that ate Reilly’s sea bass managed to get within 20 feet of our boat, but in a split second, the inevitable happened on its third spiraling jump: The mako finally snapped the undermatched 40-pound-test. Mako steaks would’ve been nice on the grill, but a coffin box full of succulent sea bass filets made us all forget about the lost mako. 🐟

SWS PLANNER:

NORTHEAST BLACK SEA BASS

WHAT: Offshore black sea bass

WHERE: 50- to 80-mile rock piles and wrecks off the New Jersey coast

WHEN: November through February

WHO: These captains specialize in sea bass:

Sea Isle City

Capt. Al Crudele
Bayhound
609-602-2066

Point Pleasant

Capt. Denis Katliarov
Russian Roulette
732-998-3776
russianroulettefishing.com

Capt. Jerry Postorino
Fish Monger
732-688-0765
fishmongercharters.com

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IN THE FLORIDA KEYS,

IT'S TOUGH TO FIND A

TIME WHEN YOU CAN'T

CATCH FISH.

BY GLENN LAW



JON WHITTLE (2)



OFF - SEASON BOUNTY



BATTLE STATIONS: Light tackle bouts with sailfish are always a possibility in the Keys.

OUTBACK: Florida Bay offers smooth passage to backcountry fishing grounds.

“THE BEST TIME TO GO FISHING IS WHEN YOU CAN GET AWAY” OFTEN MEANS WE’RE UNABLE TO HIGH-GRADE THE TIME WE CHOOSE TO BE ON THE WATER. SUCH WAS THE CASE THIS PAST FALL WHEN THE SWS STAFF CONVENED AT CHEECA LODGE IN ISLAMORADA, IN THE HEART OF THE FLORIDA KEYS, FOR A ROUND OF MEETINGS AND A COUPLE OF DAYS OF FISHING. OUR TIMING WAS DISTINCTLY OFF-SEASON, TOO LATE FOR SUMMER DOLPHIN AND TOO EARLY FOR THE SAILFISH BITE USUALLY TRIGGERED BY THE ARRIVAL OF COLD FRONTS. BUT YOU GO WHEN YOU CAN, AND IN THE KEYS, “SLOW FISHING” REMAINS A RELATIVE CONCEPT.

HUMP DAY

Work completed, we met at Bud N’ Mary’s Marina, home port of *Gimme Jimmy*, a 39-foot SeaVee owned by Jimmy Boone and captained by Dave Jones. Boone and Melissa Stevens took the ‘pit and Jones the helm as we headed to Alligator Light and its surrounding patch reefs in 25 feet of water to make bait. Pilchards, the top choice, proved scarce, but a couple of textbook throws of the cast net by Jones filled our livewell with a suitable replacement — cigar minnows — and off we went to the 409 Hump. Sitting in 600 feet of water at 24 35.853’ N/80 35.459’ W, rising to a not-surprising 409 feet, the submerged pinnacle pushes water and bait toward the surface, creating a lunch counter for predators. Along with the nearby Islamorada and Marathon humps, the 409 provides reliable action on an array of species — from billfish to bottomfish — and successful tactics run the gamut from trolling to kite-fishing and deep-dropping.

SNEAK ATTACK

We’d come to the hump for blackfin tuna and hoped to run into a sailfish or maybe a few dolphin. The strategy was to motor up-current of the image on the sounder and drift, parallel with the other boats fishing, free-lining cigar minnows on spinning gear loaded with 30-pound braid and 30-pound fluoro leaders. Staffers Keilani Rodriguez and Megan Williams went to work getting some salt-water experience under their belts.

We’d boxed a half-dozen blackfin to 15 pounds when our second boat, a 24-foot Yellowfin carrying Scott Salyers, Mark MacKenzie and Alex Suescun, radioed that they were hooked up to a sailfish. So we motored over to watch the action as Suescun worked the sail off the bow and soon had it alongside for photos and a release, no small feat considering the outfit he’d hooked it on was better suited to redfish than billfish.

Just as we had been, the trio aboard the bay boat was free-lining cigar minnows on light tackle along the edge of the 409. They’d decided to make a move because action had slowed, and as Suescun reeled in his bait, a shadow appeared behind it. He opened the bail, and the shadow turned into a sailfish that

inhaled the cigar minnow, nearly at his feet, and the fight was on.

FITTING END

With blackfin on ice and a sail to our credit, we battened down for the 17-mile run back to the dock. But as we crossed the reef, Jones pulled back the throttles. From the tower, he’d spotted dolphin. We eased in under the frigate birds shadowing the fish and cast baits as Jones called out the targets. Hookups quickly followed, and we’d soon boxed enough schoolies to round our dinner menu and top off a substantial day offshore.

FLATS HUNT

Our second morning found us motoring to the far reaches of Florida Bay, through Twin Keys and Rabbit Key Basin to Man o’ War Key, where the backcountry meets the Gulf of Mexico. Our plan called for shark fishing in the morning, then sight-fishing redfish on the tide change.

First order of business was gathering shark bait, which in the Keys means barracuda. It took some searching, but the moat around Man o’ War, slightly deeper water against the shoreline, held plenty of ‘cudas on the incoming tide. Casting tube lures and retrieving at top speed, we soon waylaid a 2-footer and brought him aboard. Through the mangroves, we heard the anglers on our companion boat whooping it up from the



JON WHITTLE (4)



2



3



4



1. ON THE FEED:
Blackfin tuna haunt the 409 Hump.

2. MAKIN' BAIT:
An experienced hand fills the livewell fast.

3. DIY: This angler swings her own dolphin over the gunwale.

4. GAME ON:
Schoolie dolphin offer fast offshore action.



1



GLENN LAW

2



JON WHITTLE

3



JON WHITTLE

MEGAN WILLIAMS

4



1. ENDGAME:

A blacktip shark comes boat-side reluctantly.

2. AIRBORNE:

A barracuda tangles with a tube lure and loses.

3. FOLLOW-UP:

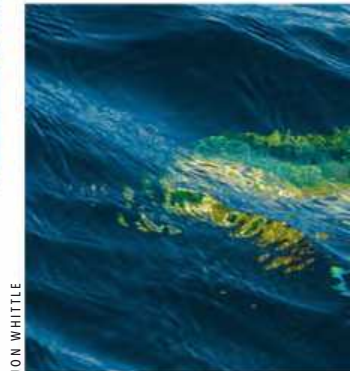
The trolling motor helps stack the odds.

4. SAIL AWAY:

This sailfish poses briefly prior to release.

5. CRUISER:

A dolphin lights up on a live bait.



JON WHITTLE



JON WHITTLE



ALEX SUESCUN



JON WHITTLE



KEILANI RODRIGUEZ



5

STEAK OUT:

Tasty blackfin tuna will soon hit the grill.

LIVE BAIT:

Barracuda make prime shark bait.

LEMON AID: The

crew wires a lemon shark for live release.

CIRCLIN': Sharks

get aggressive once in the chum line.

far side of the key, so we knew they were hooking up as well.

Tides in the backcountry seem to have minds of their own, and we scouted awhile for the right combination of clear water and a strong enough tide to carry a scent line across the flats. After a couple of false starts, we ended up back where we started, adjacent to Man o' War.

DINNER BELL

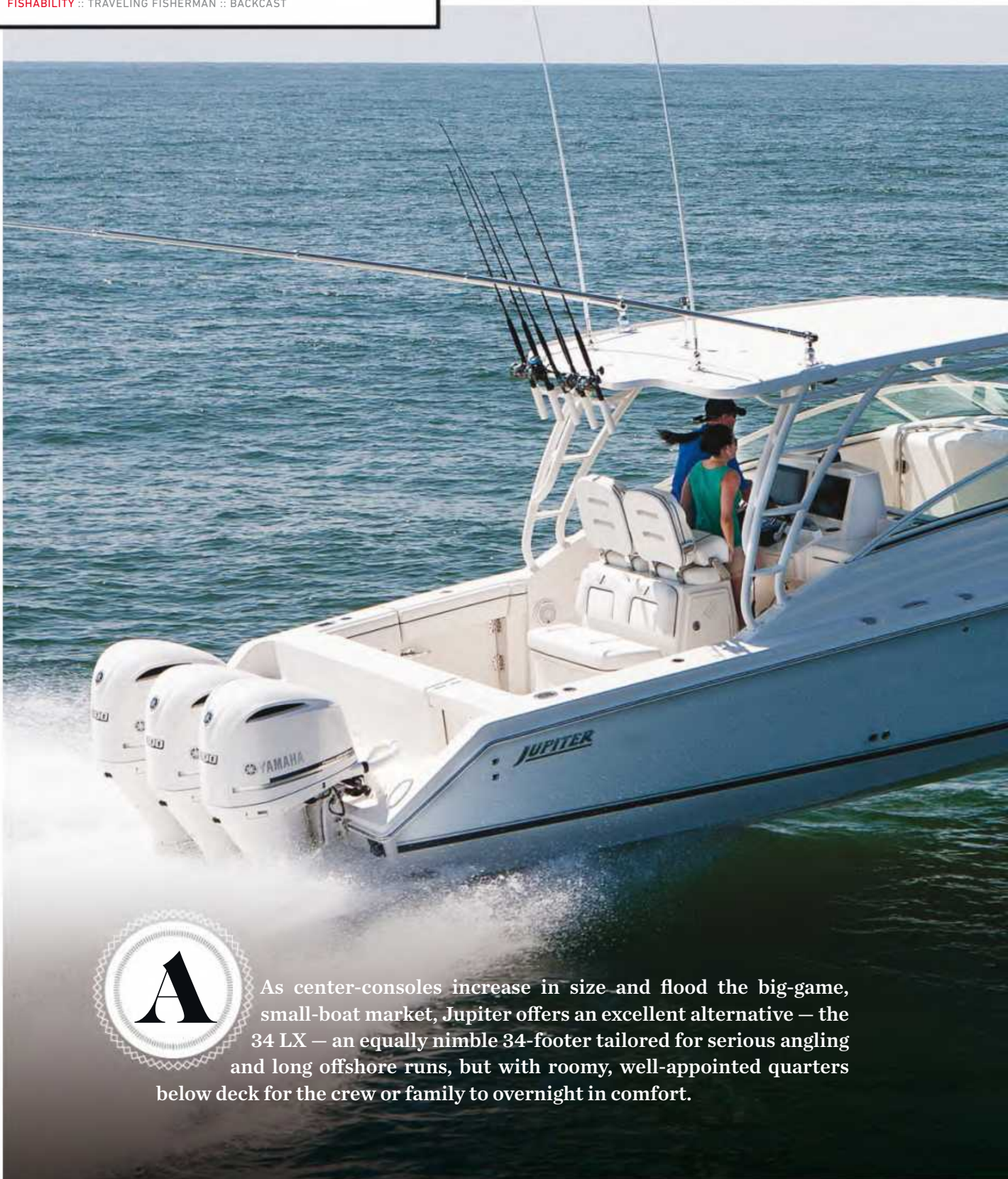
We took fillets off the 'cudas for bait, then strung the carcass, along with a couple of dolphin and blackfin remains from the previous day, on a short loop of cable clipped to a trap float and cleated it off with a short line to hang in the current. In short order, we had a visitor, then another and another. In the clear, shallow water, we watched blacktips and lemon sharks circling in and out of the chum line, interested but wary; coming a little closer with each pass to the slab of bait that Keilani Rodriguez, our designated angler, held just off the bottom in the current.

Excellent visibility and calm water offered an aquarium view of a dozen sharks from 4 to 8 feet, enabling us to choose which ones to let eat the bait. We whiffed on three before we got the first solid hookup. Though fired up, these sharks moved deliberately and required a long runoff before they took the bait deeply enough for the circle hook to grab. The mantra became "let him swim to Key West before you set the hook."

The sharks kept coming, so we called in our second boat. Easing alongside, it staked out to share our chum line, and the crew rotated through and each angler caught sharks. With the sun dropping over the Gulf toward Campeche, we decided to pack it up. The redfish would just have to wait for another visit. 🐟

FISHABILITY

FISHABILITY :: TRAVELING FISHERMAN :: BACKCAST



As center-consoles increase in size and flood the big-game, small-boat market, Jupiter offers an excellent alternative — the 34 LX — an equally nimble 34-footer tailored for serious angling and long offshore runs, but with roomy, well-appointed quarters below deck for the crew or family to overnight in comfort.

LENGTH: 33'9"

BEAM: 10'5"

DRAFT: 24" (w/ engines up)

DEADRISE: 23 degrees

FUEL: 345 gal.

WATER: 50 gal.

WEIGHT: 12,750 lb. (plus power)

MAX HP: 900

PRICE: \$433,990 w/ triple Yamaha F300s

JUPITER MARINE: jupitermarine.com

JUPITER 34 LX

A COMFORTABLE LONG-RANGE CRUISER
WITH BIG-GAME DNA

BY ALEX SUESCUN

TEST CONDITIONS



WEATHER:
PARTLY SUNNY

LOCATION:
SARASOTA, FLORIDA

WIND:
EAST 12 MPH

SEA STATE:
2- TO 4-FOOT CHOP

TEST LOAD:
FOUR ADULTS,
170 GALLONS OF FUEL,
50 GALLONS OF WATER



A 25-gallon oval livewell finished in calming blue faces astern beneath a bench in back of the helm-seat module.



The console houses dual large MFDs, plus gauges and switches, with room to spare for a stereo and Helm Master control.



A flip-up bench on the transom adds seating at the stern and stows away for an uncluttered and roomy cockpit.



The air-conditioned cabin comes equipped with a TV, fridge, microwave, sink, head and berths that transform into a dinette.

Far from a compromise, the Jupiter 34 LX offers top-notch design and construction, along with many of the features anglers expect to find in large express-style fishing boats, but in a smaller platform that is easier to manage with a reduced crew.

The hull, deck and liner are separate pieces, and the liner is bonded directly to the hull sides prior to the deck installation, a procedure that results in a larger cockpit with more toe room under the coaming and, along with Jupiter's uni-grid stringer system, makes for a more-rigid hull.

While most boatbuilders opt for stainless and bronze hardware to thwart rust and oxidation, Jupiter takes the fight against corrosion a couple of steps further: All wiring is tin-coated copper, and the fuel tanks are high-quality aluminum coated with an epoxy material to guard against exposure to salt water and counteract the corrosive effect of ethanol fuel.

Jupiter also offers an automatic battery-management system that supplies maximum power to the boat's systems while isolating the engine-cranking batteries. And when it comes to comfort and convenience, the 34 LX sure has it going on.

An L-shaped lounge in front of the console offers comfortable seating for three or four, with storage and a centrally located 85-quart drink cooler underneath. On the port side, a large hatch provides entry to an air-conditioned cabin below, complete with LED lighting, a convertible dinette with a high-low teak table, flat-screen TV, microwave oven, refrigerator, sink with hot and cold water, electric

head with holding tank, and forward storage compartments. A deck hatch with a sunshade opens forward for ventilation.

Just astern, a wide console provides the real estate for a complete electronics suite, a compass, multifunction gauges, switches, and optional stereo and Helm Master control. Next to it, a flip-up counter hides a freshwater sink. Seating at the helm is a stand-up-height module with fold-down footrests that harbors a bait prep center with ample tackle storage and a 25-gallon livewell.

The cockpit, the heart of any game boat, is spacious and boasts coaming bolsters throughout. There's a side door, a transom door with a retractable boarding ladder and twin in-deck 54-gallon fish boxes with macerator drains placed near the port and starboard gunwales where they won't interfere with crew members rigging baits or tending rods and lines. There are also fresh- and saltwater washdowns with molded hose-coil holders, a rod storage locker and three in-deck compartments offering a combined 22 cubic feet of dry storage.

Our test boat donned the optional hardtop with recessed LED lighting, which keeps the lounging area and the helm shaded — also dry with the available clear bridge enclosures — and makes a perfect base for a second helm station up top. Buyers, however, can choose a custom tower instead.

Four rod holders on the gunwales come standard, but additional flush-mount holders, a rocket launcher on the hardtop and vertical tubes on the hardtop frame are among the available add-ons, which also include

a transom-mounted livewell, a bait prep center with a 45-gallon livewell, double helm seats with a flip-up bolster, a stern-recessed seat, bow thruster, lighting in all storage compartments, underwater lights, and windlass with anchor and line.

For superior performance, Jupiter gave the 34 LX a 60-degree entry and incorporated its exclusive Posi-Stern hull-pad design that produces a variable dynamic stern lift to provide the ideal running angle at all times, resulting in higher speeds, sharper turns, better fuel economy and a smoother ride.

The ride of the Jupiter was quickly put to the test by the 3- to 4-footers encountered during our 30-mile run offshore. Despite the bumpy seas, the 34 LX remained both comfortable and maneuverable, and easily took on the chop without any jolts. Spray began aft of the centerline, slightly past the helm, with little of it blowing into the cockpit despite the moderate wind.

Powered by triple Yamaha F300s, the test boat was fast out of the hole, going from 0 to 30 mph in eight seconds before we throttled down to 4,200 rpm, a setting that pushed us at a comfortable but speedy 39.4 mph while burning 37.9 gph. That combination translated into 1.1 mpg and a considerable range of 380 miles.

Back in bay waters, I put the 34 LX through an extensive slalom test and later high-tailed it in reverse, zigzagging to simulate backing down on a billfish. The Jupiter earned high marks in both instances, adding to an excellent overall experience that included several hours of actual fishing out in the Gulf of Mexico.

Whether chasing big game far from shore or island hopping with the family, the 34 LX fits the bill. Anyone looking for a premium boat with the feel and functionality of a large sport-fisher, but at a more manageable size and more affordable price, should take the Jupiter 34 LX for a spin. ☺



PERFORMANCE SOLID PERFORMER

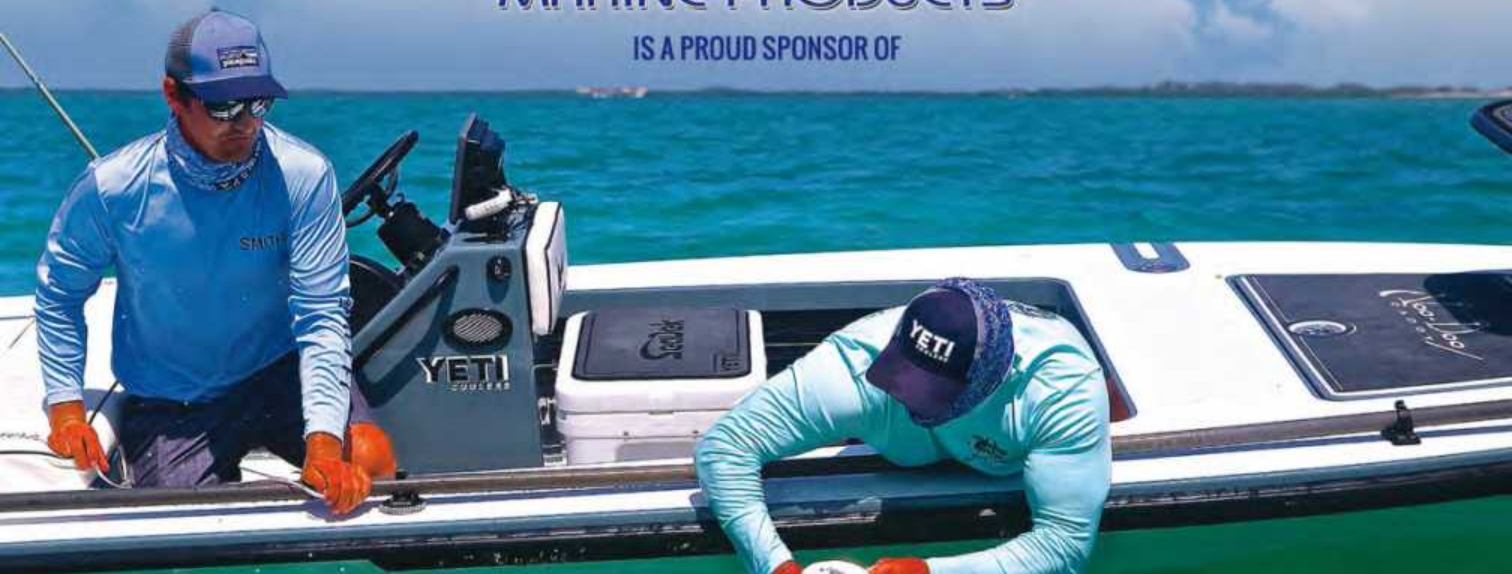
Triple Yamaha F300s get the Jupiter 34 LX on plane fast and provide the right speed-to-fuel burn ratio to reach offshore fishing grounds quickly and spend the day chasing your favorite game.

RPM	MPH	GPH
4,000	36.6	33.0
4,500	42.0	42.1
5,000	47.1	55.5
5,500	51.6	70.2
5,900	57.0	77.5
w/ triple Yamaha F300s		

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SEA FOX 266 COMMANDER

BY CAPT. DAVE LEAR

A MIDSIZE CENTER-CONSOLE STRONG ON
PERFORMANCE AND ANGLING FEATURES



Boat companies take a calculated risk when they retire one of their best-selling models. When noticeable improvements are incorporated in the replacement, consumers quickly embrace it. Case in point, the Sea Fox 266 Commander, which supersedes a popular 25-foot center-console. In addition to an extra foot in length, this thoughtfully designed boat not only offers a wealth of angling features, but also many the entire family will appreciate.

LENGTH: 26'

BEAM: 9'3"

DRAFT: 16"

DEADRISE: 20 degrees

FUEL: 143 gal.

WEIGHT: 4,200 lb.

MAX HP: 400

PRICE: \$90,000 as tested w/ twin Yamaha F150s

SEA FOX BOATS: seafoxboats.com

TEST CONDITIONS



WEATHER:
PARTLY CLOUDY

LOCATION:
CHARLESTON,
SOUTH CAROLINA

WIND:
LIGHT AND VARIABLE

SEA STATE:
LIGHT CHOP

TEST LOAD:
THREE ADULTS, 105
GALLONS OF FUEL



Forward console seating pairs with bow lounging and optional backrests for entertaining and cruising, with dry storage below.



The sizable console easily accommodates Command Link digital gauges, a compass, large electronic displays and more.



Our test boat came equipped with the standard convertible leaning post-helm seat, which sits above a slide out cooler.



A retractable ladder and nonslip SeaDek at the transom to starboard make it a cinch to get back on board after taking a dip.



The 266 has composite-core deck and hull, both finished with Isothalic gelcoat and vinyl-ester skin coat for durability, and Sea Fox offers a lifetime warranty on the latter. Stainless-steel hardware and components are used throughout, including the rub rail, through-hulls and compression latches on the hatches. The two-tone marine-grade vinyl is heavy-duty and made in-house to ensure proper fit and finish.

Sporting an aggressive entry and 20-degree deadrise at the transom, this Sea Fox provides a soft ride. The stern bites and holds in tight turns for predictable handling. While the 266 Commander is rated for up to 400 horsepower, our test boat was rigged with a pair of Yamaha F150s, a power option that proved plenty capable. The hole shot was powerful, with the bow settling quickly, affording good visibility. We topped 50 mph with a normal load. At 4,000 rpm, we reached a pleasant cruising pace of 32.5 mph with a fuel burn of 13.5 gph. Even more impressive were

the numbers with a single engine. After lifting one outboard totally out of the water, the boat eased on plane and ultimately produced a top speed of 32.3 mph at 5,000 rpm. That's reassuring if you ever drop an engine 30 miles offshore and need to get back in. Other power options include a single 300 or 350 hp outboard, or twin 200s.

The 266 comfortably accommodates a large crew or family. Forward console seating pairs with bow lounging, with optional folding backrests for those beach or sunset cruises. And there's no shortage of seating in the rear where a folding transom bench complements twin jump seats in each corner. Several hull color choices, plus accent stripes, can be ordered to add a custom look.

And this center-console comes ready to fish. Rod holders are everywhere: Four vertical ones are located aft over the splashwell, there are eight flush-mounted on the gunwales, and horizontal racks accommodate more rods underneath. Two spacious overboard-draining fish

boxes in the cockpit deck are augmented by another huge one in the bow. The bow also includes companion lockers, plus a molded compartment to hold the requisite 5-gallon bucket. A large tackle center on the starboard console houses numerous tackle trays and stores leader spools and bigger items, like downrigger balls or weights. There's a choice of a 48- or 72- quart removable cooler, depending the leaning post option, and a 55-gallon livewell in the transom. Raw- and freshwater washdowns, coaming pads, plus a rack in the head door for a measuring stick round out the long list of features.

Our test boat came with the optional leaning post with flip-back bolster seats, cushioned footrests and an extra pair of rod holders. It was also equipped with the Ultima hardtop, which incorporates recessed LED spreader lights, a seven-rod rocket launcher, molded electronics box, Kicker stereo system and Climate Cool system with twin misters. Other notable add-ons include a console coffin box, three-bank battery charger, windlass and a couple of leaning-post configurations, including a second livewell. Tilt hydraulic steering and trim tabs are standard, with power-assist steering and an LED indicator for the tabs available as upgrades.

The two-tone console adds a stylish look for the Command Link digital gauges compass. A spacious dash easily accommodates large electronic displays. A console door to port steps down into the head compartment, which is roomy for a boat this size. Twin port lights provide ambient light in the space, which allows access to

the helm rigging. A portable head is standard, but an electric one with a holding tank is an option.

The 266 Commander represents substantial improvements over Sea Fox's discontinued 25-footer. For anglers looking for value in a capable sport-fishing package, this latest model deserves special consideration. 🐟



PERFORMANCE

POWER TO SPARE

While other power options are available, a pair of Yamaha F150s proved more than enough. In fact, just one pushes the Sea Fox 266 Commander at 32 mph.

RPM	MPH	GPH
4,000	32.5	13.5
4,500	37.1	17.3
5,000	40.9	20.6
5,500	46.1	27.4
6,000	50.9	32.6
w/ twin Yamaha F150s		

FISHING LIKE YOU'VE NEVER SEEN IT.



POWERED BY



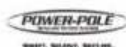
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SPECIES	1st CHOICE	2nd CHOICE	COMMENTS
	Ecuador	Costa Rica	Pacific Blue Marlin: In Ecuador, the bite heats up off Salinas, Manta and Isla de la Plata where game boats often raise 10 or more blues a day this time of year. The action also improves considerably off Flamingo and Tamarindo, Costa Rica. Find spinner dolphin, which will be chasing schools of small yellowfin tuna, and you'll also find hungry blue marlin.
	Brazil	Saint Lucia	Atlantic Blue Marlin: It's yellowfin time at Royal Charlotte Bank off Canaveiras, which bodes well for anglers after big Atlantic blues as lots of 500- to 800-pounders, and probably a few granders, are drawn by the influx of tuna. In Saint Lucia, smaller blues increase in number. Some patrol an edge less than 2 miles offshore, while others hunt around FADs about 10 miles out.
	Panama	Australia	Black Marlin: Along Panama's Pacific coast, lots of dolphin keep black marlin close to shore as fishing lodges reopen with the start of dry season. Down Under, most of the giant females have moved on, but some midsize blacks are available off Gold Coast, and lots of 100- to 250-pounders in shallow water make excellent light-tackle and fly-fishing targets off Port Stephens.
	Brazil	Barbados	White Marlin: Waters off Vitoria, Brazil, remain white hot. The region is known for its extraordinarily large whites, and many continue to feed along the first drop in the continental shelf, just 18 miles out. Closer to the U.S., the annual northerly migration of white marlin is underway off South America's Caribbean coast, making Barbados and Grenada prime angling destinations.
	Florida	Mexico	Atlantic Sailfish: Sails, lots of them, are back on the prow in South Florida. In the Keys, they begin to herd schools of ballyhoo over shallow patch reefs, an ideal sight-fishing situation for boats outfitted with a tower. In the Yucatan Channel, peak season is still six weeks away, but the bite improves steadily as sardine schools arrive and the fish start balling bait.
	Guatemala	Costa Rica	Pacific Sailfish: Prime sailfishing begins in Guatemala. Visiting anglers better build up stamina and upper-body strength beforehand to cope with three- or four-dozen hookups a day. Daily tallies in Costa Rica are nothing to sneer at as boats out of Los Sueños, Quepos and Golfito also enjoy some of the best sailfishing of the year.
	Mexico	Australia	Striped Marlin: It's stripes galore from Bahia Magdalena to Cabo this month with packs of aggressive fish raiding schools of mackerel. In Australia, the bite off Port Stephens is on the upswing with solid numbers of stripes available from Seal Rocks to the south. These fish hang around until mid to late February unless the water temperature rises to 77 degrees early.
	Bahamas	U.S. Virgin Islands	Wahoo: The striped torpedoes remain plentiful throughout the Bahamas, but San Salvador and Cat Island are still trophy central, yielding more 'hoos 75 pounds or better. High-speed trolling really pays off in St. Thomas and St. Croix this time of year, especially along the South Drop. Fish a Yo-Zuri Sashimi Bonita on a downrigger or a Lure'M wahoo bullet on the shotgun.
	Mexico	Louisiana	Yellowfin Tuna: It's time for the fertile offshore banks off Baja to shine again. Not only are the yellowfin there plentiful, but also few other places offer a better chance to hook a 300-pounder. In Louisiana, anglers hope the action at Midnight Lump returns to its legendary level. But even if it doesn't, there'll be no shortage of tuna for boats out of Venice.
	North Carolina	Virginia	Bluefin Tuna: This is when bluefin stage off North Carolina's coast. The top bite with Volkswagen-size bruisers last winter took place off Morehead City, but every season is different, and it could be the Outer Banks' turn this time. In Virginia, anglers also anticipate the return of giant tuna. Whether they come nearshore or pass 20 to 50 miles offshore remains to be seen.

SPECIES	1 st CHOICE	2 nd CHOICE	COMMENTS
	Bahamas	Belize	Bonefish: The recent decline in South Florida bonefishing leaves the Bahamas the hands-down best place to chase the gray ghost this time of year. Look for big singles in the creeks and flats edges, and schools of 1- to 4-pounders mudding in 3 to 5 feet of water. Down in Belize, temperatures remain milder, so bones keep cruising and tailing on the flats.
	Florida	Costa Rica	Snook: As cold fronts make it down to South Florida, snook seek refuge up coastal rivers, in residential canals and the deep sections of the ICW. Fishing the bridges with Troll-Rites and large shrimp or jigs tipped with soft plastics pays off. In Costa Rica, fat snook (aka <i>calva</i>) invade Barra del Colorado, Parímina and other Caribbean-side river mouths to spawn.
	Florida	Costa Rica	Tarpon: A few fish remain in the Everglades, but tarpon fishing now centers mostly around deep channels. Key West Harbor, Miami's Government Cut and Port Everglades in Fort Lauderdale are top bets. Expect the best bite at night around the full moon and during shrimp runs. In Costa Rica, Rio San Juan, Rio Colorado and Rio Parímina get the nod.
	Belize	Mexico	Permit: The number of 8- to 15-pounders available in Belize's northern atolls is hard to beat. As the weather improves, so does the prospect of targeting trophy fish from Placencia to the south. In the Yucatan, guides from lodges sprinkled from Boca Paila to Punta Pajaros and south to Xcalak tap into good permit action, but the peak is still a couple of months away.
	Louisiana	Florida	Red Drum: From Biloxi Marsh to Sabine, almost the entire Cajun coast offers great redfishing. Trophy hunters do best on deep outside shorelines and outer islands. Catching keepers in the marshes gets easier as hydrilla and other grasses die off. In Florida, expect good action from Destin to Port St. Joe, Tampa to Estero Bay, and Mosquito and Indian River lagoons.
	Maryland	New York	Striped Bass: With plenty of deep and protected waters – including various coastal rivers and creeks – and forage more plentiful than in neighboring areas, Chesapeake Bay is a comfortable place for stripers to winter. The Hudson River, between New York and New Jersey, is another. The key to both is temperature. Locate the warmest water to find active fish.
	Florida	Mexico	Swordfish: Deep ledges off South Florida's coast continue to offer the best odds to boat a broadbill. The Gulf Stream plays a major role because the fish there are more plentiful and larger on average than anywhere else. January's full moon triggers an influx of swords in the Sea of Cortez where boats from Cabo start to find them finning on the surface.
	Florida	Louisiana	King Mackerel: The winter wonderland for smoker kings is Key West where fish as large as 90 pounds have been caught in the past. But plenty of 15- to 40-pounders are spread along Florida's Gulf Coast, many staging just outside the passes. The Loop Current brings lots of kings to Louisiana this month, and some of the biggest come close to Venice.
	North Carolina	Florida	Bluefish: Blues continue to hang out in North Carolina waters. Many patrol the surf or stay just offshore of the Outer Banks, but some venture inshore and wreak havoc in Pamlico Sound. Cold fronts also push a number of bluefish as far south as Southeast Florida where they're often caught along the edge of the reef and even from bridges in the ICW.
	Mexico	Hawaii	Dolphin: In the Baja Peninsula, dorado leave the Sea of Cortez and head south in search of warmer temperatures. Boats out of Cabo San Lucas cash in, intercepting some of the fish on their way out. Dolphin action off Kona steadily improves this time of year as fish traveling through the area hang around various FADs sprinkled off the lee side of the island.

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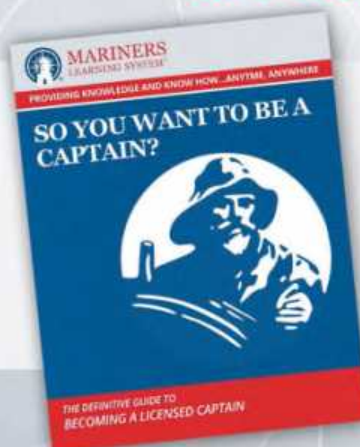
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MISTAKEN IDENTITY

HOW YOU GET THERE CAN BE AS IMPORTANT
AS WHERE YOU ARE GOING.

BY DOUG PIKE

What we drive, hunters and fishermen believe, is a reflection of who we are. That's not always true, though; not after your truck gets wrecked and the at-fault driver's insurance company, through its rental partner, puts you in a toy car.

"Sorry Mr. Pike, but this is the only one we have just now," the agent informed. "We'll call when something bigger comes in."

Well, I needed transportation and, technically, that little machine against the curb met the criteria. It was a car, by gosh, built to accommodate four (short, petite) adults or, if you painted it purple and parked it over a trap door in the center ring, 16 circus clowns. Three inches narrower and four shorter, I could have tossed it into my truck's bed and carried it instead of a spare.

And nothing against the Garden State, but this little beauty sported New Jersey plates. (There was discussion with coworkers of a little sign: "Native Texan driving rental while truck in shop.")

Timing was horrible. The wreck fell amid a great run of coastal fishing. I missed my truck, but I wouldn't miss the bite.

The next morning, before dawn, my son and I left for the coast. He's tall for 7, and



from his car seat in the back seat, his toes nearly reached the radio. And I could feel his breath on the back of my neck as he whistled, a new and increasingly annoying talent, down the dark miles.

Two-thirds into the hour-long drive, as the sky gained faint light and a petroleum refinery changed shifts, we stopped for a convenience-store breakfast.

I took a right into the lot and had to weave the Jersey-tagged shoe box between the trucks and bigger trucks of a

few dozen refinery workers.

We eased the car into a parking spot between tall, soft-sand rigs; I sat running-board high and actually could see underneath the lifted truck on my right to the mud tires of the old Bronco on its right.

I silenced the sewing machine under the hood, advised my son to stay close and move fast, and climbed out. Habit forced me to hit the door-lock button on the key fob, and so help me Jesus, the sound that

followed was the same the Road Runner makes when it stops behind Wile E. Coyote: "Meep! Meep!" And ... all eyes were on Doug.

If I'd had a shovel, I'd have dug a deep hole, climbed out and dived into it. My only chance at maintaining any manliness was if Clint Eastwood and Chuck Norris had hopped out of the car just then and patted me on the shoulder. That didn't happen.

"Why are those men looking at you, Dad?" "They're jealous because they know we're going fishing." Don't judge. It's all I had at the time, and my son bought it.

"Morning, y'all," I twanged in my Johnny Cash voice as we passed a couple of unshaven guys with thick, callused hands and worn leather gloves hanging from their hip pockets.

They returned the greeting. Whew. Maybe they figured that couldn't really be my vehicle, or maybe they thought it was and felt sorry for me. I was cool either way.

We got our snacks ... er ... we grabbed some grub, saddled back into my Little Pony, and rode toward the sunrise. Caught fish that morning too.

A few days later, I got out of the Meep-mobile and into a grown man's SUV with local tags. They say my truck will be ready in one more week, and that week cannot pass fast enough. 🐟

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